AN ISOLATED STATE OF MIND:

SEEKING A LIFE IN EXILE

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyses the evolutionary condition of exile among three Hispanic poets through an examination of the historical, sociological, and psychological state of exile that develops from past struggles and continues with a will of survival found in the production of literary works. The poets selected for this study include Ida Vitale, Juan Gelman, and José Kozer. In order to comprehend the various depths of exile, this dissertation focuses not only upon the crisis that questions one's individual and national identity, but also the recovery of one's self through nostalgia and the reestablishment of a life within a state of exile.

The importance of this study does not intend, in any way, to undermine the struggles and suffering that these writers withstood before, during, and after their experiences of exile from their native countries. In turn, one must completely encounter the profoundness of each writer's struggle and treatment of exile. This study evaluates how each poet confronts the past through a daily evaluation of the individual self and a pursuing idealism that develops in the production of their writings. The significance of each writer's experience of exile demonstrates an individual challenge to acquire understanding and acceptance of an isolated state through examining political/religious factors and sociological/psychological effects that hinder nostalgic memories of a past life and encourage recovery of one's identity.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, my husband, Brandon, and daughter, Olivia. Your love and support have guided me from my first graduate course to the final chapters of this study. You, my family, are my homeland.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation introduces an analysis of the evolutionary condition of exile among a selection of three late 20th century and early 21st century Hispanic poets. It examines the sociological, psychological, and literary development from within a life in exile that perseveres and redefines a will and identity of survival in the production of their literary works. Rather than highlighting the negative implications following a writer's experience of exile, this project refocuses upon the redirection and reestablishment of a life within a state of exile, individual approaches to nostalgia, and the continual pursuit towards a meaning and understanding of the realm of isolation. The writers selected for this study include José Kozer (Cuba, 1940–), Ida Vitale (Uruguay, 1923–), and Juan Gelman (Argentina, 1956–2014). The importance of this study does not intend, in any way, to undermine the struggles and suffering that these authors withstood before, during, and after their experiences of exile from their native countries. In turn, one must appreciate the profoundness of each writer's struggle and treatment of exile in order to comprehend the manner in which each poet confronts the past and envisions a future through a daily evaluation of the individual self and a pursuit to engage their intellect productively, rather than settling within the limits of an isolated state.

These literary figures have been chosen from three Hispanic countries so that one may observe varying degrees of the cause of exile and the repercussions that characterize

each author and his or her successive works. The significance of each writer's experience of exile demonstrates an individual challenge to acquire understanding and acceptance of an isolated state through examining political/religious factors and sociological/psychological effects that hinder nostalgic memories of a past life and encourage recovery of one's identity. The poets José Kozer, Ida Vitale, and Juan Gelman represent noteworthy examples of writers that (1) approach nostalgia with a concern for the future; (2) assume a deviant role that either promotes change of intellectual thought and defense of human rights as opposed by the norms of their native country; (3) allow themselves to re-approach their life in exile by means of poetic creation with a call for intellectual and self-enhancement. While researching the influences of each poet, one observes that Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman are all accomplished readers of numerous writers around the world. These literary influences play an essential role that permits a crucial extension of what defines exile and how each poet faces the challenges of self-identification, social relations, and poetic inspiration. Kozer explains:

> *No sigo (hubiera sido fácil seguir esa línea recta) con poetas de América Latina o España, sino que leo a Baudelaire, a Rimbaud, a Verlaine. Eso es un fenómeno que tiene que ver con mi época, una época en que los latinoamericanos nos ubicábamos en París . . . Bueno, la literatura latinoamericana y española eran para la clase, cosas del colegio, del aburrimiento y la "matanza" escolar. Pero la literatura francesa, Sartre y Camus, Baudelaire y Verlaine, Flaubert y Maupassante eran para la calle, eran de la calle.* (Zapata 174)

Vitale tells of her experiences as she states:

> I think that our literature is all literature. I resist admitting that I have to move within only one area. The truth is that my development comes from reading Homer, Dante, Virgil, Mann, Woolf, and many other Europeans . . . I read much more European literature than Latin American literature. I began to read Latin American literature late, with an occasional exception like Machado de Assis. We had to read national writers when we were students, which got us to make a distinction between the national and everything else, even without thinking about it. (García Pinto 233)

Gelman describes the importance of a continual poetic existence and consolation in all surroundings:

> *Es mi yo poético que además está integrado por muchísimas cosas: la gente, la vida cotidiana, las expresiones de que te hablé, la música, los rituals viejísimos. Lo que más me conmueve de todo esto es esa especie de belleza. Por ejemplo, la poesía china, como sabes, recoge toda la tradición oral de hace 3.500 años . . . La manera como yo lo veo es que poemas elaborados hoy en día como este poema chino, quizás sirvan de Consuelo a alguien dentro de 3.500 años.* (Dimo 113)

To begin observing the process of redirection for each poet, I have chosen a social psychological approach that underlines an identity metamorphosis of the personal self and role as a poet. This individual metamorphosis suggests a social psychological activity that involves a development of self-referent behaviors. Through the analysis of

self-referent behaviors, a social psychological study proposed by Howard Kaplan, I intend to direct the reader towards identifying the exiled poet's innovative perception of their individual identity and professional challenges within the stages of exile. Kaplan identifies four classes of self-referent behavior that include: self-cognition, self-evaluation, self-feelings, and self-enhancement or protective responses. The basis of this social psychological perspective will allow a more thorough understanding of their social conditions as well as the reaction of intellectual responses within literary images and thoughts. Kaplan explains: "As a product of past and contemporary social influences, the person, in turn, behaves in ways that have consequences for the social system. Mediating the processes by which the person is influenced by his past and current participation in interpersonal networks and his behavior that has consequences for the social system in which he participates are the person's self-referent responses" (Kaplan 225). Based on Kaplan's research, the social response to a present state of exile filters into the language and emotions created in poetry. Writing provides the opportunity to promote the poet's self-worth and a valued intellect.

In addition to Kaplan's study of self-referent behaviors, Paul Ilie also ties the importance of social psychological conditioning to support his notion of isolation and internal exile. In the introduction of the study *Literature and Inner Exile*, Ilie presents his work, stating: "The question I am raising is whether the internal structures of exile are not the fundamental ones, with geographical location being of secondary importance . . . I would contend that exile is a state of mind whose emotions and values respond to separation and severance as conditions in themselves. To live apart is to adhere to values

that do not partake in the prevailing values; he who perceives this moral difference and who responds to it emotionally lives in exile" (Ilie 2). Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman experience a level of internal exile before entering a physical displacement due to their protest against social, educational, and political issues that comprised the normative state of their respective countries. In exile, I propose that the poet's ability to cope with a state of isolation and a feeling of purpose develops constantly with the act of writing. The poems and testimonies of Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman demonstrate a particular ideology in regards to one's identity as an exile. Its evolvement utilizes the importance of nostalgia, the actions that deviate from perceived norms, and finally, a writer's metamorphosis that enhances the perception of the individual self. The objective of this study is to sustain that perception as a purpose for each poet. A purpose strengthened with an identity unrestrained by the notion of "exile".

Each chapter emphasizes the three common elements that allow these poets to reignite an identity and life in exile. As stated previously, Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman (1) approach nostalgia with a concern for the future; (2) assume a deviant role that either promotes change of intellectual thought and defense of human rights as opposed by the norms of their native country; (3) allow themselves to re-approach their life in exile by means of poetic creation with a call for intellectual and self-enhancement.

The first chapter is dedicated to the poetic works of the Cuban poet José Kozer. Kozer, who now resides in Havandale, Florida, left Cuba in 1960 and began a new life in New York. He resided in Spain for a short period before moving permanently to Florida.

The collection of Kozer's poetic works will be analyzed by the studies of Walter Benjamin and his conception of "insightful remembrance" known as *Eingedenken*. The research of Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia* also aids the approach to nostalgia within Kozer's poems. The following sections develop as aspects of resistance and deviance through language are viewed in Kozer's poetry. The studies of Howard Kaplan are utilized to better comprehend the reasoning for such deviance. Among the works of José Kozer, I selected poems from *Stet*, *No buscan reflejarse*, and *Ánima* for the elements emphasized in this study. I was fortunate enough to contact Kozer for an online Skype interview in which he graciously answered questions concerning various topics of literary influences, the challenges of exile, the importance of nostalgia, and his development as a poet.

The second chapter of this study will focus on the poetry of the Uruguayan writer Ida Vitale. For many writers, the experience of exile creates a confined environment in which the individual reacts through a developing perspective that exceeds the limits of time and bears sentiments of nostalgia towards the image of their country and past. The poetry of Ida Vitale faces the obstacle of losing one's sense of self in the solidarity of exile with a nostalgic perspective that, at the same time, realizes the rebirth of the soul and the transcendence of poetic creation. Vitale, born in 1923 in Montevideo, represents one of the literary figures of "*Generación de '45*". In the year 1973, Vitale was forced to leave her native country of Uruguay as a military junta would soon be assuming power. The initiation of another stage of her life began as Vitale encountered the life of an exile in Mexico with her husband, another well-known poet, Enrique Fierro until 1984.

Although Vitale currently resides in Austin, Texas, the poet returned to Montevideo for a brief period of four years which, in turn, expanded her perspective of not only living as an exile but facing the life and world that she was forced to leave behind.

Included in this analysis are the poetic works of Vitale produced during the years of her exile in Mexico (1974–1984) and more recent poems written while residing in Austin (1998–2001). The poetry of Ida Vitale transmits an effect of questioning: does hope of salvation exist through language and the production of writing? This analysis proposes to reveal how the Uruguayan poet continues her poetic creativity through a perspective challenged by exile and driven with the desire to communicate reflection and thought by means of poetry. The collected works of Vitale in this dissertation include *Sueños de la constancia* (1988), *Procura de lo imposible* (1989), *Reason Enough* (2007), and *Garden of Silica* (2010). These collections demonstrate the manner in which the environment of an exile situates the poet in a moment beyond not only the physical borders of displacement but also those of her normal mentality.

The final chapter analyses the poetry of Juan Gelman from his collected works *Unthinkable Tenderness*, *Hacia el sur u otros poemas*, and *Dark Times Filled with Light*. Due to the political unrest in Argentina and Gelman's profession as a journalist he entered into exile in 1975, leaving his country for Europe. Gelman returned to his homeland in 1988 for one year but chose to live outside his native land and began residence in Mexico City in 1989 where he remained until his death in 2014. Alongside the analysis of his poetry, I observe how an approach to Gelman's work coincides with the reflections of observers of the Monument to the Victims of State Terror in Buenos

Aires. Both involve an element of fragmentation in which the physical pattern of the monument, along with the structure of Gelman's poetry, is representative of a wound or a defining scar. However, this fragmentation generates a movement of progression in his poetic verses and life in exile. Gelman builds an intellectual energy, breathing life into an interconnected past and future. It is an evolvement of language and of poetry that mirrors the poet's perspective as an exile.

The poems first introduced display a poetic voice that remarks of the dangers of exile and the limitations that can surface from isolation. This state of isolation marks barriers between languages, family relations, and social/cultural ties. Gelman survives what he views as poisons of exile through a denial of becoming a writer fixated in a damaging intellectual block while in exile. Gelman's perception of defeat within exile is redirected. I explain the process of this redirection with the studies of Theodor Adorno and his belief that the intellectual can overcome the defeat of the enemy through a redirected energy of anguish that ignites a restructured path of hope and resistance. The thoughts of Edward Said from *Reflections in Exile* assist the final poems chosen in the chapter in order to capture Gelman's maturity as a poet and continual path of transcendence in his poetical works and life in exile. The poetry of Gelman, like the monument, provokes encounters with the dead but also engages the reader/observer to transcend memories, loss, and pain towards an intellectual energy and knowledge. For Gelman, poetry is the wound. Healing is a continual process that requires an engaged dialogue with exile, a recollection of the dead, and a reestablishment of the intellect's survival.

In view of the varied experiences of these authors, one comes to the realization that their memories, testimonies, and desires integrate into a notion of exile that, at one moment, marginalizes the individual experience while, on the other hand, unifies a global voice. Their global impact has proven evident as Kozer received the *Pablo Neruda Ibero-American Poetry Award* in 2013, Vitale was awarded the *Reina Sofía Poetry Award* in 2015, and Gelman received the *Miguel de Cervantes Prize* in 2008. This is a global voice that does not allow fear or pain to prevent the individual's yearning to question, to seek advice, vengeance, answers, and to turn to hope in order to survive the isolation through the act of writing and producing a testimony that transcends the borders of exile. Among the authors Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, the isolated state of exile fails to succeed in weakening the mind and only strengthens through the need to recover the past, enhance one's understanding of the individual self, and direct one's thoughts towards the future.

The literary works of Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman carry a collective spirit that can be summarized within the words of James Joyce in his work *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*: ". . . You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I do not believe, whether it calls itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I am allowed to use—silence, exile, and cunning" (Simpson 258). This declaration of Joyce captures the passion of the selected authors in this study because of the initiative to celebrate their individuality encountered in exile

and an exuberant spirit to survive the injustices of their own country or religion through the liberty of the innovative, artistic mind. Besides the liberty that each author integrates within their genre, the success that results from their literary production will always be confronted with a motivation to overcome past tragedies that continue to follow the individual for the whole of their lives.

Exile involves many levels of interpretation that evolve through the following: the reason of displacement, a physical or inner exile, the possibility of return, and the attitude towards a life within exile. By considering the various perspectives of exile throughout history and individual experiences, this dissertation intends to expand upon the common association of exile with a negative connotation through examining the works of three Hispanic writers, all descending from European ancestry, that encounter an individual evolvement in exile.

Exile involves a process in which an individual, or a collective group, witnesses a transformation by means of a physical or mental isolation. Inevitably, it leads to the questioning of one's identity and challenges the survival of being enclosed within a defined space. The type of isolation, physical or mental, and the reasons of displacement reside within a structure composed of various social, political, religious, and familiar environments. The historical accounts of prominent exiled figures demonstrate the various levels of exile that occur due to a forced punishment outside of a marked territory or the individual decision to flee one's homeland in order to avoid discrimination, incarceration, or even death. Therefore, how can one define exile with a single explanation? Does a true definition exist in order to understand what exile

signifies? For each individual or collective group, exile remains to be interpreted as a personal significance that differs among each case. Defining exile requires the importance of an ample comprehension in what the term encompasses. It reflects a process of feeling and/or suffering from a punishment, a departure, a life in isolation, an acceptance of an exiled life, and the possibility of return.

The term "exile" itself has commonly been associated with that of negativity and the condemned throughout historical cases of exiled figures such as José Martí, Julio Cortázar, and Reinaldo Arenas. The process of exile embarks a journey with the initiation of condemnation or a punishment due to differences in beliefs or practices that lie outside the social, political, and/or religious norms mandated by a significant majority or those with an authoritative power. Paul Ilie states:

> The word *exilio* is a modern Gallicism for the older word *destierro*, literally dis-place-ment that lays stress on the "landlessness" of the situation…This does not deny the usefulness to historical observers of such terms as *exiliado* for designating political contexts, *emigrado* for personal and economic contexts, and *transterrado* . . . for the philosophical context of allegiance to one's spiritual land: one's native tongue. Such usages are reminders that the nuances of the term "exile" multiply in a complex population drift such as occurred in the Hispanic world after 1960, and that a careful study of each semantic stage before and after that date still awaits a diligent scholar. (Ilie 8)

For this dissertation, I propose that it is essential that one identifies and analyses an isolation that is encountered not only in the physical displacement of an individual but also an internal isolation that challenges one's concept of time, survival, and resistance. The act of writing itself provides liberation for many exiled individuals. However, this liberty does not free them completely from the past that will always accompany their perception of life. For poets like Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, writing contributes to their life in exile as a way of coping and by providing an extension of identity and determination. Identity and language become dependent upon one another and find survival with the process of writing poetry. Their exile not only allows survival but also fosters an advanced intellectual reaction that amplifies their language and poetic expression of the exiled experience. Gertrude Stein states the challenge of living between two worlds and the changes of one's self in *What Are Masterpieces*:

> America is my country and Paris is my home town and it is as it has come to be. After all anybody is as their land and air is. Anybody is as the sky is low or high, the air heavy or clear and anybody is as there is wind or no wind there. It is that which makes them and the arts they make and the work they do . . . It is very natural that every one who makes anything inside themselves that is makes it entirely out of what is in them does naturally have to have two civilizations. They have to have the civilization that makes them and the civilization that has nothing to do with them. (Simpson 157)

Stein's words turn our attention to the competing question of identity that faces many exiled writers. It is as if the world of one's homeland and that of the displacement are strained in levels of deconstruction and development of the individual's identity. The identity develops within the principal culture but then confronts, voluntarily or by force, an environment that wills a reformation, a metamorphosis, of the self.

As this dissertation proposes life in exile as an evolving process, the thought and works of Franz Kafka bring forth the complexity of differences felt from within the self. Kafka assumes the position of isolation while caught between German and Jewish environments. His religious identity only composes part of a struggle that is defined, as well, by sickness, a disassociation with his father, and a passion for writing. The struggle that encloses Kafka is described in *La carta al padre* as he writes:

> *Con tu aversión atacaste de un modo más acertado mi actividad de escribir y todas aquellas cosas, para ti desconocidas, que se relacionaban con ella. En dicha actividad, había conquistado de hecho cierta independencia respecto a ti, aunque esa independencia recordaba un poco la del gusano, el cual, cuando un pie le aplasta la parte trasera, intenta soltarse con la delantera y se arrastra hacia un lado. En cierto modo me sentía a salvo escribiendo, podía respirar; la repulsión que, como es natural, sentías también hacia mis escritos, me resultaba excepcionalmente bienvenida.* (Kafka 47)

The disassociation as seen with Kafka and his father represents, for many exiled writers, the alteration of perceived values and the behavior that deviates from the

normative expectations of a reference group. This reference group can be comprised of family members, friends, and/or authoritative figures of their respective countries. Peter Beicken identifies an important aspect of Kafka's *Metamorfosis* that transmits the feeling of isolation, not just within the story itself, but the isolation felt by the reader. "Alienation as an element in Kafka's writing and a quality of his works is, at the same time, a crucial factor in the historical process which shaped Kafka's life. The self alienated artist is a detectable part of his writings, and the narrative form is apt to subject the reader to the experience of alienation in its manifold manifestations, thematically, structurally, and in meaning" (Beicken 400). In the chapters to follow, Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman share with Kafka the welcoming spirit for writing as it replenishes and sustains the survival amidst an isolated state. Therefore, the poems chosen will display the manner in which these poets transfer energy reflective of nostalgia, deviance, and perseverance to the reader.

The multiple dimensions that must be considered in studies of exile came together in a publication of *Literature in Exile* in 1987. The examination resulted from a conference in Vienna, sponsored by the Wheatland Foundation of New York, in which writers from various countries argued their concept of exile according to their personal and professional experience. John Glad, the editor, writes in the introduction:

> Despite Victor Hugo's claim that "exile is life," politicians really prefer Ovid: "Exile is death.". . . Later, when passions cool down, there may even follow a sort of life after death . . . From the point of view of the writer, however, exile is at best a mixed bag . . . The writer's discussions

> at the conference clearly revealed that the exile experience is far from uniform. From the point of view of the Turkish writer in France, the 'exile' status of an Argentine writer in Venezuela may well be questionable (Glad vii-viii).

According to Glad, the relevant topics of the conference in relation to the process and consequences of exile included the history and role of exile, the departure, political environments, literary traditions, changes in language, the similarities and differences between authors, money, and repatriation (Glad xii). While reading the testimonies and arguments of *Literature in Exile*, the reader's attention focuses upon a fundamental principle between exiled writers. Within this principle the writer encounters a stable residence embedded in the act of writing despite the obstacles of displacement, past memories, and a fragmented identity.

Among the many historical cases of exile, readers witness the initial acts of deviance, the importance of the reader, the difficulty of assimilation, and the question of identity. Generally, exile is noted along with the creation of man and woman and the punishment cast upon Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The first human beings define the act of "being human" due to our primordial imperfection to test and deviate from established laws and predetermined values. One perceives the castigation of Adam and Eve as a continuous condition of humans to identity our own self and the purpose of that identity in life. The story of Adam and Eve also characterizes the consequences that follow actions and/or thoughts. It is then in the power of the individual to determine how

these consequences will create possibilities of hope or continue in further paths of destruction.

Historically, the role of the reader appears to bear great importance in the case of Ovid. During the years 43 BC to 17 AD, the Roman poet Ovid was cast into exile and marked one of the first voices that spoke out against his isolation. The reason for his punishment remains a mystery, but the poetic verses in *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Pronto* tell of the injustices that were suffered during his isolation. The notion of establishing a relationship between the exiled writer and his audience appears as Ovid bargains for his reader's attention amidst pleas and descriptions of his cruel punishment. In the following passage of *Tristia*, Ovid forwards a message to his readers and proclaims how his poetry will survive the injustice that entraps him to solitude:

> This is for you, dear friend: disown me in public, acknowledge
> my words in your heart . . . Your devotion's a comfort, yet my poems will
> furnish a larger portrait: read them, such as they are,
> those verses that tell of human transformations . . .
> What I seek is not praise but pardon, I'm praised in abundance
> if, reader, I contrive to avoid your scorn (Ovid, *Tristia, Book 1,* 5, 11-13, 31-32)

Ovid also defends his position as a writer to Brutus despite the critique and condemnation that brought him to a state of exile. The following excerpt from *Black Sea Letters* serves to expose the poet's perception of exile as a burden but not an end to his creativity:

> Then why (you ask), if I see my own transgressions,
> do I persist in the error, leave my work
> wide open to attack? To perceive a disease and cure it
> are two different things: we all feel,
> but it takes art to root out the trouble. When I'm set on changing
> a word, now, I often leave it: strength forsakes
> my judgement. Correcting (why not tell truth?), the burden
> of endless labour, too often I find a bore.
> While you're writing, the very labour's a joy, it lessens labour,
> And the growing work glows along with the writer's heart . . .
> Yet though the words are the same, I write to different people—
> One cry for help, many addressees (Ovid, *Black Sea Letters*, *Book III*, 13-22, 41-42)

Among Latin American writers, the works of José Martí demonstrate the development of an individual voice that, for many others, best represents a collective voice of suffering and demands for change. Martí, a poet and essayist, criticized and publicly examined the conditions of his native country, Cuba, under a colonial government. In response to these actions, the writer was incarcerated at the age of nineteen and then forced into exile in Spain (Chang-Rodríguez 227). The works that best model his experience in exile and as a poet consist of *Versos libres* y *Flores del destierro* (1933). The following verses of *Dos patrias* taken from the collection *Flores*

del destierro capture Martí entrapped in memories and the need to re-establish in another country:

Dos patrias tengo yo: Cuba y la noche.
¿O son una las dos? No bien retira
su majestad el sol, con largos velos
y un clavel en la mano, silenciosa
Cuba cual viuda triste me aparece
¡Yo sé cuál es ese clavel sangriento
Que en la mano le tiembla! Está vacio
mi pecho, destrozado está y vacío
en donde estaba el corazón. Ya es hora
de empezar a morir. La noche es buena
para decir adiós. La luz estorba
y la palabra humana. El universo
habla mejor que el hombre (1-13)

Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) marked a change in Latin American literature as his works flourished within the literary movement known as the Latin American Boom of the 1960s. Cortázar, considered an Argentine writer, was born in Belgium from which his parents fled due to German occupation and eventually settled in Buenos Aires. After publishing his first novel *Bestiario* in 1951, Cortázar voluntarily left Argentina due to a discontent relation with Argentine politics and the lack of activism for human rights. He moved to France where he remained until his death in 1984. Cortázar, though recognized

more for his work as a novelist and short story writer rather than a poet, still fulfills the objective as a Latin American writer that fosters the importance of intellect and growth even when creating literature outside of one's homeland. In *A Turbulent Decade Remembered*, Diana Sorensen presents the political and literary efforts of Cortázar presented from the paper *"Literatura e identidad"* at a UNESCO meeting in Mexico in 1982. Cortázar summarizes his literary energy while in exile:

> The Latin American writer is to bring the difficult search for and inspection of every fountain of national blood to their ultimate consequences. In order to continue being useful for cultural causes, our literature needs to set itself a sort of catalyzing task; upon submerging itself in our reality, it will transmute it into the verbal flask that in turn will transmute it into its most unitary and totalizing form; since what we call culture is not really anything more than the presence and the exercise of our identity in all its force. (Sorensen 104)

Cortázar addresses his Latin American colleagues to maintain an active voice that ignites thoughts and service for the development of one's culture, future, and language. The poetry of Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman unite, as Cortázar implores, with poetic voices exiled from their homelands like catalysts that value memories in order to find worth in their survival. The exile of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) revealed another Latin American writer that did not allow his exile to restrain his poetic verse and vision of his identity apart from his homeland. Due to Neruda's involvement with the Chilean Communist Party, he was forced to flee Chile in 1949 and lived in various European

countries until his return in 1952. In the poem *"Testamento de otoño"* from *Estravagario,* Neruda reflects upon a life experienced in multiple lands that have accumulated an appreciation of cultural differences and the need to open our global perspective:

De tantas veces que he nacido
tengo una experiencia salobre
como criatura del mar
con celestials atavismos
y con destinación terrestre.
Y así me muevo sin saber
a qué mundo voy a volver
o si voy a seguir viviendo.
Mientras se resuelven las cosas
aquí dejé mi testimonio,
mi navegante estravagario
para que leyéndolo mucho
nadie pudiera aprender nada,
sino el movimiento perpetuo
de un hombre claro y confundido,
de un hombre lluvioso y alegre,
enérgico y otoñabundo. (1-17)

Neruda's poem regards his experiences while in exile as a step towards working as an intellectual writer concerned for his countrymen and the political trials of his day. His work as a poet is not defined by a particular method of poetic verse, but by the movement of his life in various countries and the active pursuit of intellectual conversation. In "From Pablo Neruda to Luciana Souza: Latin America as Poetic-Musical Space" Maria L. Figueredo writes "Neruda's poetry manifested an evolution towards a transcultural strength following his experiences of both exile and migration. Thus Neruda's work can be considered in light of Edward Said's well-known suggestion to 'consider the entire world a foreign land"' (Yovanovich 174). This dissertation demonstrates how, like Neruda, Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman each perceive their exile in a positive, energetic light that engages the poet as well as the reader to welcome a world full of intricate webs that aid in our development as individuals empowered by our thoughts and actions.

The Argentine writer Jacobo Timerman provides the reader with a testimony of the most defining period in the life of a Jewish man persecuted by the violence of the Argentine regime in the 1970's. Perhaps the most defining moment of Timerman's experience of marginalization occurs while the writer is imprisoned in 1977 without an official accusation for his capture and torture. Following his release in 1979, Timerman was forced into exile in Tel Aviv, Israel. After residing in Madrid and New York, he returned to Argentina in 1984, where he remained until his death in 1999.

The following thoughts of Timerman demonstrate his ability to perceive himself as an integral part of enhancing, not only his own self-worth, but the importance every

individual has in fighting for their survival: “This «realism», this pragmatic spirit, is the most important mechanism of survival in a totalitarian country . . . One can say to oneself, my acts aren’t going to change history and will lead only to my death; but if I survive, I’ll be useful in the reconstruction of the country” (Timerman 137). Timerman remains faithful to his own set of values of survival and hope even if he is subject to more humiliation of his existence. He believed that this humiliation would save his life.

As the analysis of this dissertation develops, the authors presented in it display the perseverance to redefine their lives not by the values of the imposing force of exile from one’s homeland but rather the values that promote a celebration of individuality that seeks to bridge past memories with future ideals. At first glance, it is evident that the use of the term “joy” in relation to the concept of exile presents a contradiction of opposing states and emotions. However, this proposal seeks to examine the continual process of reflection and intellectual thought of three exiled individuals who enhance one’s social identity by encountering positive self-coping mechanisms that occur prior to, during, and following the state of exile. The formation of an individual’s identity is developed through the cultural attributes and behaviors that influence a certain group of individuals. This conception, based on the expectation of society, develops a social identity. As we form a self-conception, the need for self-evaluation arises because individuals desire to think of themselves in a positive manner, and engage in behaviors or actions that enhance the perception of their social identity. Along with the identification of self-enhancement behaviors among these authors, the reader must first consider the trials that led these individuals to confront prejudices and injustices with a

need to seek truth and a passion to communicate to a broader audience through literature. For Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, the state of exile fails to imprison the human spirit and the ability of the writer to freely express an insightful observance of a reformed individual in spite of tragic circumstances. This study proposes that exile bestows upon the individual an opportunity to remind oneself of suffering and look, through nostalgia and memory, towards the possibility of the existence of more —the freedom of thought and writing away from their homeland.

In summary, the main objective of this dissertation remains to draw upon certain key figures of Hispanic literature that propose and direct a meaningful insight towards the painful hardships of a life of exile, the mind-full games of memories, and an achieved peace with an isolation of self. The analysis of the exiled writers José Kozer, Ida Vitale, and Juan Gelman will display that these particular writers will never succumb to their frustration and pain of being termed a victim of exile. The productiveness of their writing and willingness to persist through an emptiness of understanding why reveals that these writers define their identity by the act of transformation. For these individuals, transformation instills itself in their environment, self-conception, and the individual mind. Through the work of these authors, one perceives that each will not succumb to being a victim in the state of exile by a process of redefining a value system that promotes a healing act of questioning, remembrance, patience, and a willingness to exert the intellectual thought for what lies in the future.

CHAPTER II

JOSÉ KOZER: SETTING POETRY IN MOTION

"Poems, the string of poems, the row of a life. A life moved. *Docere, delectare, movere*: teach, delight, move; the three foundations of the sermon, the 3 ideal functions of a poem…" –José Kozer (Herrera 209).

In the fall of 2010, I met José Kozer while attending a poetry symposium at Texas A&M University. As I took notes from his talk, I realized how fortunate I was to be present and witness firsthand the testimony of a writer featured in my dissertation, which is a rare case for most doctoral students. Kozer left his audience with a deep appreciation of his life, work, and, from his testimony, three noteworthy elements became evident: remembrance, resilience, and growth. In order to establish the strength of these elements in Kozer's poetry, this chapter combines studies that focus upon remembrance (Walter Benjamin), nostalgia (Svetlana Boym), and self-enhancement behaviors (Howard Kaplan). It is because of the challenging energy in these three elements that I choose to incorporate Kozer with the exiled writers Ida Vitale and Juan Gelman to exemplify how a poet restructures his or her life's path by finding success and hope within a continuous reconstruction of the poetic verse. Exile, perceived as an artistic catharsis, can serve as a positive force that enables maturation of the writer and the self. The writer and poetry reciprocate energy between one another. Exile fuels that energy by reconfiguring the writer's identity with their language, past, and survival of

intellectual growth. While reading the collections of Kozer, a sense of statehood becomes apparent within the lines of his poetry, as explained by Jorge Luis Arcos in an interview with the poet: *"Su obra, que puede soportar miradas desde el multiculturalismo, la diáspora, el postmodernism, el neobarroco, todos . . . El poeta ha hecho de su poesía una segunda patria, o segunda naturaleza y, con naturalidad y perseverancia, ha ido dibujando una especie de mapa cannibal, una suerte de aleph dozeriano, desde donde se desplaza de su cuerpo al universo y viceversa"* (Arcos 25).

In 1940, José Kozer was born in Cuba from parents who migrated from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Therefore, the concept of relocation and reconstruction was not new to his family. Kozer voluntarily left Cuba in 1960 and began a new residence in New York. He studied at New York University and, five years later, received a Bachelor's of Arts degree. In the year 1997, Kozer retired from teaching as a full professor at Queens College of the City University of New York. He then resided in Spain for two years and currently lives in Havandale, Florida. With noting the various stages of Kozer's life, I believe the reader will also benefit from the poet's own perception of his life through three different types of trees. During Kozer's presentation at Texas A&M University, he pointed his life stages in relation to a fichus, a sycamore, and a Japanese maple tree. First, the memory of childhood shared an association with a fichus tree. The sycamore was representative of the poet's life in the "north", marriage, and having children. Kozer described himself as a "domestic poet" with all the elements of reality (Kozer, Texas A&M symposium). The Japanese maple, a tree that Kozer planted himself, shows a slow growth documented by the poet. The attention to the

growth of the maple mirrors Kozer and his attention to the development of language and poetry. With the progression of this chapter, we will observe Kozer's attention to preserving his native language that branches to the success of his poetic expression.

To study the writings of Kozer is to study a life and an art of movement. This movement exists due to the growth of an individual physically relocating the self and reenergizing a life of writing. The physical move for Kozer from Cuba to New York initially impacted the poet's physical senses, but he soon becomes aware of an internal change. A loss of Spanish occurs when Kozer conforms to the demand for English in order to find work. In the following citation, Kozer observes the constant movement of life and how the movement of change is inevitable:

> I am first- and last-generation Cuban . . . and with my death my Cuban generation will come to an end. A short lineage. This doesn't have to be taken as a disaster, this is not tragic, it's not melodrama or mess-up: this, on the contrary, is the norm in the world in which we live. We are all of the first and last generation of something in a changing and accelerating world that evaporates us, as in an immediate and palpable sense that for me Cuba evaporated in 1960. (Sadow 92)

Kozer testifies that his generation in Cuba does not mark resentment or a tragic past. It is the progression of life, and Kozer's life as an exile becomes a norm that evolves with the changes of a modern world. He acknowledges this movement with the term "evaporation". Life and work evolve through various states or stages. For Kozer, every

individual will experience that of their "generation" and dissipate with the movement of progression. Life and poetry cannot constrain the writer to remain in a permanent fixture.

Voicing the Past, Present, and Future

Of the three impressions Kozer bestows with his character and poetry, this study begins with the importance of remembrance and the notion of nostalgia. The interpretation of memories suggests the manner in which Kozer perceives the future. The knowledge of the past can weaken or strengthen the intellectual growth and hope towards the future. The theory of "insightful remembrance" (*Eingedenken*), developed by Walter Benjamin, applies to Kozer's treatment of nostalgia and the perception of how past memories integrate within the present and future. An approach to Benjamin's theory titled *Waking the Dead*, by Karen Remmler, describes "insightful remembrance" as a "work in progress" (Remmler 2):

> Benjamin suggests activating the process in order to create a possibility in history for the redemptive power of change. This process distinguished itself from remembrance as recollection, reconstruction . . . Instead of interiorizing the past as the etymology of the German word for remembrance, *Erinnerrung*, suggests, one practicing insightful remembrance perceived the interaction between past and present in history and recognizes that the images of the past are subject to distortion. Instead of perceiving the past as a chain of events, each absolving the previous one, fragments of the past become visible in the present. (Remmler 16-17)

The remembrance of past events and/or people falls subject to an unorganized, chaotic manner. Memories become distorted because of the individual's present state of being that conjures certain contexts of memories. The current exiled state finds the individual in a realm of uncertainty where memories can echo instability and loss. Kozer addresses the subject of time and its presence, like the clocks in a house, as a reminder of a continuous connection of the past, our present state, and the movement towards the future. In the poem "Home sweet home" from *Stet,* a collected set of poetry, Kozer explains the effective presence of time that surrounds us:

> They've passed, those days of deep anxiety…
> There are five stopped clocks in the house.
> But the one that works is terrifying, as are these things these nights
> (these lapses) the moon divided by the blinds or the
> shadows of the chair struts on the wall (a strip of shadow) (1, 5-9)

The poem opens with a sense of relief vanquishing anxiety, but soon reverts to the working clock that threatens a sense of security with time. For Kozer, the working clock is life in the modern world. Its movement into the unknown is terrifying and unclear as the light of the moon is interrupted with shadows of darkness. Svetlana Boym addresses the power of fear in *The Future of Nostalgia* by directing the taboo on nostalgia, or one's fear to be withheld in the past, towards a retrospective and prospective ideal of longing (Boym xvi). According to Boym, the well-known homecoming of Homer in the *Odyssey* should not be considered a truly circular journey. A further explanation of this idea involves an introduction to the term "modern nostalgia":

> Modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of a mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history. The nostalgic is looking for a spiritual addressee. Encountering silence, he looks for memorable sign, desperately misreading them. (Boym 8)

Kozer represents the idea of a modern nostalgic in the poem "Home sweet home" by freeing the anxiety of the past while still lying exposed to a working clock. His clock serves as a reminder to the poet to continue seeking in the darkness. As the poem continues, the modern nostalgic notes the inability of a complete return for an exiled writer. The stopped clocks have blocked any passage to regain the past. The terror associated with the working clock reinforces a recurring ambiguity. For Kozer, to continue life is to continue searching and questioning "and then?":

> Nothing comes easy despite the safety net it's better to keep going:
> what peculiar flesh we are (shrovetide flesh of the connoisseur flesh of
> continuity) and we are stricken
> at the sign his finger pointing his fancy.
>
> Does he want us to accept this?
>
> Me, I refuse (a luxury I can afford, of course-I own my house) propri-

etor of a peak-roofed chalet, the water coursing down
each side if it weren't for the tar we'd be afloat in-
doors.

And then? (18-27)

For Kozer, the stopped clocks hold no threat to life but the working clock emphasizes a never-ending search and questioning of—what then? A further view of Kozer within this state of a modern nostalgic appears in the following citation of the poet: "This posterity implies a Diaspora that I know in an archetypical and ancestral way. Diaspora is *atopos* (the no place): no place and all places; not the nationality but the Orbicular Nation: in her one is taken in as to a free and open center that if one listens well, fills our pocket with poems. Diaspora, then, a center of fluidity, and at the same time, a fluidity without a center" (Sadow 92-93). The poet, therefore, recognizes the "home, sweet home" not as a physical, material surrounding but as a spiritual or intellectual state that constantly faces a challenge of one's awareness of the self and their writings.

Nostalgia also appears in the poem "Reappearance" with aspects of shadows and light. The poet narrates the movement of a self-image swinging through the past and present. He distorts the common senses of sight and smell so that shadows of his past are pursued by odor instead of sight. Identity, as a child then a man, is encountered in different stages while triggering various memories. Kozer reverts back to a childhood stance as he crosses the door:

Returned after 40 years to my house in Santos Suárez, allowed to visit…
They allowed me to open its doors, I smelled its shadow, the child
sniffing out the child…
Celebrations. Eternal Spring. The shadow of the son observing his own
flesh. The shadow frolics, but the flesh frolics also.
It's girandole and carousel, the double swing of the
doorway in its ceaseless (rhomboid) sway between
light and shadow, balanced unto generations of
children, the shadow gathers me (1, 5-6, 11-16)

This recollection ties to the study of nostalgia by Svetlana Boym in which the author describes two kinds of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Kozer identifies with reflective nostalgia because of his attention to details (ex: smells) and the overlapping of time and generations (ex: carousel/time and light/shadow). Boym illustrates reflective nostalgia through an individual that "thrives in *'algia'* the longing itself, and delays the homecoming; dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity; calls truth into doubt . . . does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones . . . it loves details, not symbols" (Boym xviii). "Remembrances" reflects these elements of detail in reflective nostalgia described by Boym. Kozer recovers detailed objects of his parents but only pauses to observe a personal item. The poem concludes with an individual memory that allows continuity and recovery:

There was time enough for me to recover my mother's small purse…

to recover the fluff next to the sharp edge

of my father's crumbling thimble, to bend my brow

for a moment over a book on my bedside table…

(17, 19-21)

The element of balance appears in the carousel-like movement of time and the shadows that are followed by the living, or the flesh, as Kozer describes. Each generation connects with one another with a sense of possibility and hope as its shadows cross between the past and the living flesh. The shadows of the past do not withhold the poet in the house, but rather directs the journey to seek a progressive movement, the continuity of life. Another important element arises within the poem through an opportunity of "recovery". The poem states a recovery of material objects. However, it can also be viewed as an attempt to preserve a valued image of Kozer's family. The last object mentioned, the book, recovers the importance of literature that has inhabited the poet's life from past to present.

From the poems of "Seven prose pieces", Kozer includes "The voice of love (his master's voice)" in which a loving recollection of his mother's voice is followed by the difficulty and loss of recalling his father's voice. Through this poem the reader observes a connection to Walter Benjamin's idea of the transformative power of memory. The memory of his parent's voices opens the poet to a multitude of meanings and ruptures the track of nostalgia:

Often I hear my mother's voice . . .

It's always the same voice, sweet and calm, unchanging. It

> comes to me, not when I need it, but when it foresees that I will: it arrives, not to offer solutions, but to accompany their resolution.
>
> I never hear my father's voice. In my childhood I must have locked his Spanish with its Jewish inflection in the dungeons of the unconscious, I don't hear it. I can imitate but not hear it: it's not his voice I imitate, but my own striving to find it: I close my eyes, I force myself, I search (1, 5-12)

The search that Kozer encounters coincides with Benjamin's theory of memory, also described through the investigations of Svetlana Boym: "Nor does Benjamin entertain the ideal scenes of nostalgia. . . . Instead he plays with a "fan of memory" that uncovers new layers of forgetting but never reaches the origin: [Benjamin writes] "He who had once began to open the fan of memory, never comes to the end of its segments. No image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded and only in its folds does the truth reside" (Boym 36-7). This relates to Kozer's urgency to maintain his native Spanish language while in exile. The fear of losing the memory of his father's Jewish inflection uncovers the poet's own battle to search within his language for the words of a poetic verse. In connection with the theory of "insightful remembrance" of Benjamin, the poem "The voice of love (his master's voice)" highlights a consistent distortion of memories and, in this case, the attempt to reconstruct voices. The fragmentation of recalling the father's voice requires the poet to reformulate or reconstruct through an imitation of the voice. However, the fragmentation of voices, this fan of memories noted by Benjamin, unfolds as a progressive movement that never encounters an answer. The

fan, like Kozer's carousel, changes with each generation. This constant reconstruction prevents an individual from finding a definitive answer because the answer is in a constant state of reconfiguration.

Kozer describes his position, before a multitude of voices from the past, as a mediator. In my interview with the poet, featured at the end of this study, Kozer explains how his father's voice through childhood stories and mother's appearance in dreams continue to support his poetic course. He explains in a separate article the two major opposing forces between his conservative father and more liberal, maternal grandfather. Kozer states: *"Dos fuerzas mayores operan; la maternal, donde evoco ahora a mi abuelo, un judío ortodoxo, creyente, íntegro, dedicado . . . pero que curiosamente y pese a su ortodoxia tiene algo de liberal, de abierto . . . Por otra parte (y sé que simplifico) está mi padre, el rebelde, el que se aísla de su propio padre . . . Su voz se hace rebelde, política . . . Entonces, yo estoy en el medio, yo soy el intermedio; es decir, el vehículo, el poeta"* (Zapata 172). Kozer converts this written memory of voices to a transformative power by accepting the loss of his father's voice, or paternal relationship/identity, among a multitude of other influences. "The voice of love . . ." concludes:

> Beyond reach? Rather that when I try to hear it instead of a single voice a spring of voices emerges: their modulation varies, they're confused, they lose their balance; the tunes pass from monochrome to polyphony; that voice dissolved in voices forms words that at times seem Slavic, at others Chinese, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese. Some of its tunes are clearly Havana, others Ukraine, others Mexico, and some

a macaronic English, with the guttural sing-song of Yiddish.

I have counted fourteen voices, but his I never find, will never find. That voice was lost in childhood, sometimes I think to find it again, but it's no use: it was lost in his own childhood before it was lost in mine (16-26)

The interference of Slavic, Hebrew, Spanish and other voices again relates to the theory Benjamin cautioned as a danger of distortion within memories. "Unlike Freud, who claims that nothing is lost once stored, Benjamin stresses the transformative power of memory as well as the danger of its distortion. The perceived memory trace, once retrieved by consciousness, is not identical with that which was originally placed in memory . . . Active remembering, according to Benjamin, means grasping the trace in the recognition of the historical cause of its destruction and distortion" (Remmler 17-18). Indeed, this particular poem displays the "active remembering" of Kozer and the active voices that complete his identification and aid his conscious. However, Kozer assumes the position of speaking for his ancestors and presenting their lives as much as his own. The following citation details how Kozer views his position as mediator: *"Entonces, ¿quién va a escribir por mi padre? ¿Quién va a escribir por mi abuelo? La respuesta se cae de la mata. Y me pongo a escribir, a inventor y reinventar sus dramas, sus presencias, sus deformaciones e incapacidades. Los poetizo (deformo); los recreo (reafirmo). Ellos pueden ahora escribir. Y yo también"* (Zapata 173). Kozer, as mediator, displays a remarkable effort of recreation and reestablishment of the self through poetry. He embodies the theory of "transformative memory" by knowing that

the "loss" can only be traced to his father. For Kozer, the poet's willingness to recreate transforms the "loss" to an affirmation and invention through words. Kozer develops strength from his mediation knowing that the act of *"poetizar"* his ancestors is a distortion but the distortion must occur to recreate and rebuild upon the loss of his country and language.

The difficulty and desire of tracing his father's voice follows Benjamin's theory which recognizes a historical deconstruction of his father's identity. Kozer converts this distortion in order to reconstruct a present understanding that the loss cannot be traced nor blamed upon the poet but was lost by the father before his search began. He states in an interview: *". . . tengo que escribir, que se trata de una compulsión de tendencia aclaratoria, confirmatoria; de una comunión con la familia, una vinculación entre la calle y el cuarto, lo exterior y lo interior, lo político y lo religioso. ¿Simplifico? Sin duda: pero en parte, dicho así, algo se aclara"* (Zapata 173). The concluding expression *"algo se aclara"* translates as "something is clarified". This clarification begins an act of re-evaluating the values the poet utilizes to strengthen his self and ability to communicate the self with poetry. Kozer experiences a self-re-evaluation through stages of resistance to the English language and defying the norms of poetry.

Resistance and Resilience in Language

Through the studies of Walter Benjamin and Svetlana Boym, the first segment of this chapter has focused on how the importance of memory allows an individual to reconstruct the present by means of a "redemptive state" of utilizing past memories. The

following section directs the study from nostalgia towards the acts of resistance and deviance Kozer develops in order to strengthen his poetry in exile. Kozer indicates the importance of memory through acts of resistance, in particular a resistance to the English language. While resistance and remembrance are not concepts usually associated with one other, the poet keeps his English in an insufficient state in order to support his Spanish. Kozer recalls his resistance in "Ay Doan Peek Eenglee or No me pica la ingle (My Groin Doesn't Itch)" stating:

> Around 1970 the language that had been lost-or rather bottled up in my psychic system-manifested itself once again. From that time on, my English remained in place, more or less static, while my relationship with Spanish grew stronger, proliferative, plural, and ecumenical. Thus, I can say that I learned English by resisting it. I learned it and studied it, while also evading it enough so that my Spanish, natural and unruly, did not weaken, but rather matured in all its multifaceted forms in Spain and Latin America. (Miller 128)

At the symposium held at Texas A&M University, Kozer explained to his audience his past attempts to use English when writing poetry, but his thoughts failed a successful translation. During the presentation, Kozer proved the spirit of his first language by using an example from the Spanish verbs *creer* (to believe) and *crear* (to create). If the verbs are used in the first-person form (*creo*) the appearance is the same but it carries two meanings of "I create" or "I believe". For Kozer, *creo* (creating/believing) are one. An additional act of resistance was exposed as the poet

explained the automatic translations his wife's expressions in English to his native language. Here the importance of resistance preserves the Spanish language and attempts to prevent a state of deterioration. Therefore, this resistance aids in the preservation of the memory of his first language and sharpens its use while living with the challenges of a bilingual life. Kozer realizes that to succeed as a poet, he must prevent the loss of Spanish because, in turn, he will ultimately lose to the deterioration of his poetry.

The importance of noting these acts of resistance leads readers to appreciate a state of resilience within the poet. Kozer states that the act of exile and the isolation allows one to realize they have resilience. At the poetry conference, Kozer displayed a position of resilience by stating the following: "I am not led by the world—books are the best investment" and "I can suffer, my poetry cannot" (Kozer, Texas A&M symposium). Kozer's resistance to losing his native tongue and writing ability can be viewed as a deviant behavior because it conforms to a personal relationship with his art and not the social relationship with an English dominant society.

In order to apply the act of deviance in the work of Kozer, this study integrates four classes of self-referent (reflexive) behaviors developed by Howard Kaplan. Kaplan identifies the four behavioral classes beginning with "(1) self-cognition (including conception, perception, awareness), (2) self-evaluation (a special case of self-cognition in which the person perceives himself or herself as more or less approximating self-evaluative standards), (3) self-feelings, and (4) self-enhancing or self-protective responses" (Kaplan, *Social Psychology* 224-225).

The poetry of Kozer, like that of the Ida Vitale and Juan Gelman, embodies a necessary self-reflection and self-evaluation that allows the writer to cope with the circumstances that brought them to a state of exile. The mechanism of coping through defiance enables the opportunity for self-enhancement, or an individualistic sense of worth through the act of writing. The research of Kaplan describes the concept of deviance by stating: ". . . to enhance self-feelings, the individual is motivated to seek out and adopt alternatives to these patterns that may fall outside the bounds of former limits of acceptability, whether socially or personally defined" (173).

In this particular case, Kozer does not allow the experience of a negative self-evaluation by the act of exile, his personal identity, or his family's identity as Jewish. The deviant behavior leads Kozer to a stage of self-enhancement through a process of defying the negative aspects of displacement. Through language, the poet is resilient to the loss of his Spanish, the past, and a homeland he cannot change. The words of Edward Said regarding the importance of language in the following description from *Reflections on Exile* relates how writers like Kozer globalize the experience of exile through a resilience to recover and re-conform language and memories:

> To value literature at all is fundamentally to value it as the individual work of an individual writer tangled up in circumstances taken for granted by everyone, such things as residence, nationality, a familiar locale, language, friends and so on. The problem for the interpreter, therefore, is how to align these circumstances with the work, how to separate as well as incorporate them, how to read the work *and* its

> worldly situation. . . . Out of such travail there comes an urgency, not to say, however, that only an exile can feel the pain of recollection as well as the often desperate search for adequate (and usually unfamiliar) expression so characteristic of Conrad, but it is to say that Conrad, Nabokov, Joyce, Ishiguro in their use of language provoke their readers into an awareness of how language is about experience and not just about itself. (Said xv)

In the prologue of an anthology of Hispanic poets from the United States, Kozer writes of the importance of resilience: *"En todos [estos poetas] persiste la voluntad consciente de salvaguardar la lengua madre, en tal grado que el español (más que lo español) llega a constituirse en un modo de proteger la identidad personal, estableciéndose un estado consciente de separación con el medio ambiente anglosajón"* (Arcos 26). Therefore, exile is viewed as an enhancement to his poetry and his use of language, sustaining a continuous growth and reason to write.

During my interview with the poet, he explained the difficulty of functioning between languages: *"Yo estaba pensando esta mañana que soy como una isla . . . más bien lo que diríamos un cayo . . . rodeado por un continente gigantesco. La isla es el español y el continente gigantesco es el inglés . . . El español es el único idioma en cuánto puedo escribir la poesía . . . La dificultad era doble . . . El inglés no me permitía la escritura . . ."* (Interview with Kozer). The poem "*Babel*" from the poetic anthology *No buscan reflejarse* addresses the loss and recuperation of Kozer's words from his native Spanish language and the influence of other languages:

Mi idioma

natural y materno

es el enrevesado,

le sigue el castellano

muy de cerca, luego

un ciempiés (el inglés)

y luego, ya veremos (1-7)

Generally, an individual functions within their native language in a natural, comfortable manner. For Kozer, language, even his native language, is competitive. His experience in exile, as noted by the poet himself, faces the challenge of living and working between languages that can enhance and destruct one another. He explains "My Spanish was decomposed and recomposed through the experience of exile, the diaspora of the word. English is one of the two languages I use in daily life, one of my two greatest treasures, but I must keep it at bay. Otherwise it would keep me from maintaining the degree of poems that I have been sustaining for decades" (Miller 129). Kozer gives English a certain amount of credit to his survival in exile but Spanish is the only language he attributes to his success as a poet. His poem continues:

. . . el idioma dio de sí lo que pudo, a mi

madre se lo agradezco, y a la Madre de

madres de los idiomas: su bonche y

alharaca a babor, a estribor han dejado

estela ubérrima, Poesía, un túmulo vacío,

un catafalco deshabitado (pueril) (pueril)

y de regreso, cortejo fúnebre del lenguaje,

su cero utópico multiplicando indócil

la extremaunción (mil y una noches, con

sus días) de mis poemas en extinción (40-49)

Kozer continues the poem with images of struggle, vacancy, and a certain "death" of language. The strain of languages invades not only daily life, but his professional life as a writer. It is as if Kozer imagines a cycle of life for language as the poem addresses its constant movement and inability to achieve a utopian state of perfection. A poet's journey in exile is similar to the journey of language. In addition to the voyage being anything but ideal, both the writer and language find common ground, a final resting place, in a poetic discourse. This cyclical journey and the personal statement previously mentioned ("I can suffer. My poetry cannot.") reveals to readers a willingness to suffer emotionally and physically to the repercussions of exile but not artistically. Kozer openly resists the disablement of his language that could strain and weaken his self-expression within a poem.

In the article "Noción de José Kozer", Gustavo Pérez Firmat studies the works of Kozer and the impact of *"el desarraigo",* or the feeling of being uprooted. Pérez Firmat *states "La poesía de José Kozer es una profusa y profunda meditación sobre el desarraigo. Pero no sólo una meditación; más aún: un festejo. . . . Todos sus libros, a pesar de su diversidad, testimonian y celebran la carencia de ambientación vital y lingüística* (Pérez Firmat 152). Kozer disassociates his values, as a writer, from the

development of a negative self-image that entails a writer failing to utilize his language. He re-establishes a new set of values by affirming a resilience to silence and uncovering that one can never escape the dangers of memories and thoughts. Kozer explains this process in the following quote:

> *Tengo salud, tengo energía, tengo la necesidad de hacer: se me inculca la idea del reposo, de la siesta, que es una horrible institución, la institución del desespero, de la desaparición. Estoy metido en una habitación y de ahí no puedo salir en tres horas, hasta que pase el hervor de la tarde y me pueda reincorporar a la felicidad, a la calle, a la gente. ¿Qué hacer? Empiezo a escribir. Noto que se me llena la cabeza de ideas, de fantasias, que todo eso me ayuda a matar el tiempo pero que a la vez todo eso me enloquece, me hace peligrar. Entonces, para no peligrar, para no sufrir, me pongo a escribir: es decir, sustituyo una forma de peligro por otra, casi diría que una forma de sufrimiento por otra.* (Zapata 172)

Kozer finds himself caught between the dangers of two states of being: (1) *"el reposo o la siesta",* or finding oneself inutile and meaningless and (2) *"el matar el tiempo",* or the danger of fantasy and imagination. Individuals will choose not to conform to negative self-feelings by means of a self-protective behavior. This behavior chooses to separate one's self from situations or behaviors that could negatively affect an individual's system of values. Kozer utilizes the concept of adaptation in order to focus on the usefulness of the memories and thoughts that may drive us away from self-

empowerment or self-enhancement. As an exiled writer, Kozer moves between the two forces of danger as an adaptation to a new value system and becomes aware of his own self-enhancement through the pursuit of living and creating poetry.

While studying the poetry of Kozer, the reader faces unique traits of the writer that strengthen his approach of resisting the norms of poetry to reach his individual style. "So I Return to the Call" represents Kozer's affirmation to write despite outside criticism while demonstrating an attitude of humility to the poetic verse[1]. At times the security of the poet's home, or rather the security of his verses, is vulnerable and threatened by external forces. However, it does not prevent the poet from using these threats to recreate and ignite a renewed energy:

> So I return to the invisible call of verse,
> signed by guile, blood, vexation, impertinent
> I affirm, I bow down,
> and like an ex tempered by obligation
> I see there were three women who wanted to scatter my lines,
> abomination, depositions, assassination in my own house,
> but like an ox anointed I continue regurgitating . . . (1-7)

The poem becomes his homeland; a place where the poet is born, matures, and dies. It is a creation only the poet can maneuver and, for Kozer, a poem has no limits. The poem concludes as Kozer states his control and his values. His words take the shape of a weapon that enables the poet to stimulate progression and change. At this point, Kozer

[1] Poems that have been translated to English will be presented in order to allow readers who do not speak Spanish the opportunity to study the works of José Kozer.

sees himself as his biggest threat. The poet assumes an ultimate control in which he values life and a verse of strength:

> I reload the word, incite devotion and apostasy,
> I do not fall to my knees, I alone contaminate myself
> trying to duplicate and repeat the blurred interjection
> of this impenitent poem.
> I am the poet, in death's last clutch,
> I am a people of sad rumbas
> I am Joseph, Benjamin of the incidents,
> Judith with the giant's gruesome head held in her fine long fingers. (11-21)

The poetry of Kozer can challenge a reader with its broad use of vocabulary and incorporated abstract insertions of ideas or streams of conscious. Pérez Firmat describes the complexity of Kozer's poetry as a utopia composed from his upbringing in Cuba and exile in New York and Florida. Throughout life, Kozer has been surrounded by multiple influences of languages. The Slavic languages of his parents invaded the Spanish environment in Cuba. His exile in New York and, even still in Florida, involves a competitive battle between English and Spanish that, for the benefit of the poet, continues to challenge Kozer without tying him to one particular language. Pérez Firmat states:

> *Lo peculiar del "habla" de Kozer es que, al menos en un plano léxico, ambiciona confundirse con la lengua. No se contenta con nada menos*

> *que "todo el vocabulario". Esta falta de sectarismo lingüístico le presta a su poesía un carácter inubicable, utópico. Utopía, en su acepción etimológica, quiere decir no-lugar. La poesía de Kozer, en la cual confluyen su herencia hebrea, su nacimiento y crianza en Cuba y su larga estadía en Nueva York, se escribe desde un no-lugar. Creada al margen, en una especie de no-man's language se resiste a encasillamientos y filiaciones.* (Pérez Firmat 153)

Kozer demonstrates the concept of "no man's language", as noted by Pérez Firmat, in the following poem "Tangibility vs. Intangibility". The opposing forces mirror how Kozer poetically transforms while in exile. From one perspective, exile denotes a physical or tangible space. Kozer resists these tangible constraints of exile by writing and creating his language free of limitations. Kozer states a resilience to artistic rules as he directs the reader towards a personal devotion to literature. He also finds that literature will always present a constant movement between notions of stability and uncertainty, a challenge welcomed by the writer:

> Because of tangibility (and it's a good thing one's feet are firmly planted on the ground) it's obvious that whoever agrees to
> this digests his food while seated in an armchair
> (Montaigne's tower) surrounded (the effect perhaps exaggerated) by books (books piled in acrobatic
> balance) . . .

I choose I choose to read I choose this evening beneath the prodigious
weight (true overweight) of all the writer-beings
composers or scholars. I choose to read softly
(quietly) (quietly) the brief poem of Koran Shiren
(the poet Gozan) in which he describes in brief how
the stability of things loses its certainty or how, in
fear (true *tenebrae)*, the total absence of sound or
wind brings near the distant bell that announces to
all the preservation of all things forged of intangibility (8-13, 24-33)

From the lines of "Tangibility vs. Intangibility" established his cause to resist any dimension that confines one's ability to learn, to fear, and to change. He describes his resilience with openness to literature and writing: "If it's true that Paul Celan said 'Poetry doesn't impose, it exposes,' then he spoke well. And paraphrasing Celan, I can say that with me 'poetry imposes itself on me and I expose it.' I don't know where it comes from, in any particular case, I would be able to say that it comes from everywhere. And how it imposes itself is abrupt, unexpected. It's always awaited and comes unexpectedly" (Sadow 91). '

In the article "José Kozer: Pasión y transfiguración de la palabra", Sabás Martin complements the view of Kozer as a writer open to the unexpected. He has come to understand that an open intellect only deepens his passion for achieving great poetry. Kozer did not confine his abilities to only one language even after noting the setbacks of his Spanish when first learning English. Martin writes *". . . la poesía de Kozer es un*

arriesgado combate, una perpetua confrontación con la palabra poética. Sus poemas—posibilidades, sendas abiertas a lo acontecible —no aplacan ni confortan. Al contrario: estremecen, inquietan. En ellos no hay confirmación ni conclusiones. Sólo el acceso a un mundo que se define en la medida en que se comete y se cumple a sí y en sí mismo: exaltación y perplejidad del lenguaje" (Martin 145). The resistance Kozer displays in life and his poetry would not be successful without a powerful resilience to survive, learn, and adapt amidst the trials of developing a life after exile.

The effect of Kozer's resilience in the previous poems brought my attention to the statement of William Carlos Williams from his autobiography *I Wanted to Write a Poem*. Shortly after residing in New York, Kozer began taking literature courses and gaining intellectual interest as well as confidence through readings of William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens. Kozer's path to producing successful poetry parallels not the artistic style of Carlos Williams, but rather the artistic attitude that urges writers to envision and execute literature true to their being. Carlos Williams proclaims:

> The only way to be like Whitman is to write *unlike* Whitman. . . . I might even so please some old dotard, some "good grey- poet" by kow-towing to him; but not to Whitman—or if I did please Whitman I would not please myself. Let me at least realize that to be a good poet one must be himself! . . . What have I done now! "Be himself?" What the devil difference does it make to anyone whether a man is himself or not as long as he writes good poetry. "Be a Whitman, if you will, only please, if you love your kind, don't write like Whitman." (Lowney 32)

I questioned Kozer during our interview about his thoughts on Williams' concept of releasing one's identity from past poetic figures. Kozer replies stating

> *No es que mi poesía tiene que ser difícil, una poesía referencial . . . En mi caso, a diferencia de lo que dice William Carlos Williams, yo no soy yo. Yo me identifico más con el "negative capability" de esa famosa carta en John Keats dónde lo que él está diciendo sobre Shakespeare es que Shakespeare no es Shakespeare sino es todos los personajes de todos los documentos que los va creando.* (Kozer, Skype interview)

Kozer explains the progression of his poetry with respect to the many readings he has experienced with writers and languages. He describes that in a single poem one may encounter the influence of Ezra Pound, José Lezama Lima, John Keats, and T.S. Eliot. The poem "Autorretrato" best reflects how Kozer views his poetic works as a compilation of literature and languages. Kozer views himself as a receptor of multiple literary influences that range from Kafka to Neruda to Rilke. The first verse explodes with multiple identities he adapts through his intake of literary texts:

> *Receptáculo y rendija, camaleón, cambiacasacas, y (soy) otro (míralo por*
>
> *la cuarteadura de la vasija) un cuarto de hora.*
>
> *Esta misma tarde, para no ir más lejos, fui Hawthorne traducido por mí*
>
> *(yo) cinco páginas suyas, se arremolinaron*
>
> *nieves: por su fulgor me deslicé y di (de mí)*

otro cuarto de hora revolcado en el tedio
de una carta (soy) de Kafka: bigas y trigas
y cuadrigas me guían a Oriente a la zaga
de autor único unánime, todo crece (yo)
amaino.

Este ser bazofia, se me descuajeringa en cuarenta rombos al día, cito:
Kafka Tolstoi Chuang Tzu; de una pieza Musil
un lastre Vallejo un arrastre Pablo Neruda
bicéfalo Rilke (París) (Moscú) soy Safo soy
Ajmatova y al filo de la una (me develé) soy
el vivo retrato (bicéfalo) de mis (dos) padres:
San Juan; Wittgenstein (sólo cuando está en
Noruega); ¿OK?
…(me imito) copio (me copio) de espejismo (en)
espejismo, omnívoro: ya comí del rostro de los
demás ya defequé de sus residuos, este (otro)
residuo (1-18, 29-32)

The translations and mirroring affect presented in "Autorretrato" are what Kozer terms as an "*ocultamiento*" or what one can consider a concealment. The act of concealment can be viewed as layering the poet with diverse visions learned from his reading collections. For Kozer, this "*ocultamiento*" contributes to his resilience against losing the

capability of creation. For some critics, the "*ocultamiento*" may represent a difficult interpretation. However, it should be considered an accumulation of multiple insights and the awareness to the importance of a poet's openness to reflection and the feeling of freedom. Exile serves as a generator for breaking the rhythm of enclosed readings and allows Kozer an indefinite realm for his poetic verse.

In the following words of Kozer, the reader connects his resilience to what he calls a "controlled liberty" or freedom: ". . . *se puede hacer un buen poema, pero no se puede hacer el deseado poema* (Wallace Stevens: <Is there a poem that never reaches words . . .?>). *Si algo he alcanzado es un estado de controlada libertad, de oxigenación abierta, que me permite inscribir registros múltiples, desde una numerosidad modera o, más que moderna, actualizadora*" (Arcos 31). Before continuing into the process of self-enhancement with Kozer, a portion of the poem "The nonagenarian's soliloquy" defines the writer's impact of resilience within a continuous mode of uncertainty. The poet reaches an acceptance of ambiguity in life. His reflections on a life in exile, described in a positive light, still question the ultimate meaning which, for Kozer, is the ultimate way to live and survive:

> . . . I was what's the word, happy, still am despite the
> confusion) (the basis of happiness?) and now that
> no one looks at me, now that no one pays attention,
> or better, now that I pay attention to no one, I live
> the luminous luxury of living confused, hell it's
> wonderful, and look what I look like…(29-35)

Strength in Re-creation

The final portion of this chapter on José Kozer focuses on the growth of the poet and the value of recreation. Kozer represents a writer that succeeds in finding self-worth after his exile from Cuba. This value traces itself through a process of altering the normative expectations of exile. Those expectations can include a fear of isolation, the threat of losing one's native language after displacement, the loss of work as a writer, or even worse, a diminishing will to produce literature. Thus far, this dissertation has shown how Kozer defines his self-worth through acts of resistance and a determined resilience. However, Kozer also finds personal strength by re-conforming his reference group, or those who share common goals, aspirations, and values.

The work of Howard Kaplan defines the evaluation of self-worth as "a function of the person's perception of the degree to which he approximates the relatively highly placed values in his hierarchy of values in a more or less consistent manner" (Kaplan, *Social Psychology* 63). In a striking way, Kozer keeps his past memories close at hand but, at the same time, values the recreation of life after exile within the aspects of his wife, family, teaching, books, and poetry—a re-invention of the homeland. Exile has taught the poet that one's home consists of much more than a physical space. Kozer redefines his value system so that exile restructures a new connection with origins of family, teaching, and poetry.

To finalize this study of Kozer, I find it appropriate to tie the spirit and movement of his poetry to that of a pragmatic spirit. The philosopher George Herbert

Mead defines one of the beliefs of pragmatists as those who "believe that humans do not respond to their environment; instead, they almost always interpret their environment. . . . The world does not tell us what it is; we actively reach out and understand it and decide what to do with it" (Charon 31). Kozer embodies a pragmatic spirit due to his establishment as an active exiled writer. His world is in a constant movement of teaching, writing, reading, and inviting challenges of concepts that will change in a modern world. The poetry integrated in this last portion demonstrates how Kozer embraces such factors as maturity, death, and, ultimately, the Word. Kozer maintains active through exercising an intellectual challenge with the Word and, finally, embracing his exile as an energy within his poetry. "Mercurial motion" exemplifies the maturity experienced by the poet:

> I see myself as a run-down garden . . . Each time more than the last I'm
> overcome by a sort of euphoria: I
> lose myself there . . . I read aloud the oration of Conradus
> Crambe (Scriblerus) in defense of his innocence
> ("the justice, being strangely astonished") the body rebuilt
> of clichés, rebuilding a body with clichés crafted
> of shard of flesh: I can't, finally, separate Word from Death . . . I see
> myself. (1, 5-6, 9-14, 18)

For Kozer, the euphoria he feels connects with awareness of death. The failure to separate the two only urges the creation he sees as himself, his poetry. Furthermore, the reader confronts a blatant honesty towards the process of aging and the acceptance to a

life of questions that remain unanswered or a sort of peace found within a state of confusion. The ability to reevaluate one's self and reenergize one's work would cease to exist without confusion and questioning. Kozer identifies his aging with that of a neglected garden but recovers life in an euphoria of literature. The literary world heals his weaknesses and rebuilds the body of poetry.

The strength of Kozer as a writer and individual appears in the following poems selected from *Ánima*. As one begins to read, the titles of every poem carry the same expression of "*Ánima*" to signal the continuous vitality of an individual's spirit. The titles represent a constant mode of development and the reoccurrence of an evolving identity. Kozer opens the book noting first his age, which signals a personal and literary maturity that is still developing. He points to a fundamental element of circularity and the reoccurring enclosure of an island.

> *Asimismo, escribiendo esos poemas, ese hombre de sesenta años intuye que de haber un sobremundo como el que Dante nos revela, por su modo de vida, por sus vicios y virtudes, lo más probable es que al morir tenga que pasar cierto tiempo en algún punto del Purgatorio. Dado que el autor de estos poemas nació en una isla y dado que el Purgatorio es una "isoletta" ("Quien isoletta intorno ad imo ad imo,") entiende ahora que los poemas que configuran Ánima participan de este otro fundamento: el de la recurrencia, la circularidad, el punto de partida que tiende (necesita) cerrarse en una oval, en un redondel o circunferencia, en que*

lo último regresa a lo primero; en este caso la isla se dirige a la Isla, o Cuba entronca (germina) en la isoletta. (*Ánima* 7-8)

In exile, the poet acknowledges the constant pressure of isolation as he must remain resilient to losing his language. The island that he left still encircles the poet's search for an identity after exile. The point of departure from Cuba reminds Kozer of his journey to progress within the effects of exile. However, Kozer challenges the enclosure that follows him with an intellectual openness to literature, languages, and his identity. The poems that make up *Ánima* reflect the poet's identity intertwining with a poetic creation. The repetition plays upon the continuous evolvement of one's need to be attentive and committed to remembrance and growth. The following poem exhibits the poet's conception of time and its continuity:

EL VIEJO TEREBINTO DA VUELTAS a mi alrededor, estoy exento.
Soy del fuego una pieza redonda soldada a la Nada.
Celo el semen de la progenie celo hecho de la continuidad.
Ajustado el tiempo para dar una vuelta alrededor del terebinto no pude entrar al
bosque.
Otro aspecto más de la consuetudinaria demarcación del tiempo.
Perdí la cabeza (la hila la hila) (di más vueltas que un trompo): al compás de los
pasos del Extraviado en su circunscripción alrededor
del terebinto (me mareo).

Soy una circunferencia un verde circunstancial ropas ajadas (olorosas) a

trementina.

Hasta la heces (qué me digo, hasta la zupia) amo el resollar de pasos por la

hojarasca mojada las agujas de pino en los bosques:

¿entraré? ¿Claro, del bosque? (1-14)

Readers encounter aspects of nature and the enclosure of a forest determined to set the boundaries of time. However, the revolving motion that Kozer describes does not impede the poet's freedom. It creates energy. This energy reminds me of how Kozer stated in our interview that he learned to not define himself only as an exile. His identity contains multiple experiences that are perceived in the second half of the poem. One may initially perceive the revolving motion as structured and predictable. Kozer detains himself for a moment to observe the motion of his poetry as continuous and a progressive reformation. Voices call him to return but the only return Kozer can capture is by the act of writing:

Me detengo: se me pasó el mareo. Doy otra vuelta en redondo recojo unas bayas

(rojas, aún) del viejo terebinto al fondo.

Versículo: una dirección (no estoy) un lugar de origen (no soy) una entrada (al

pie del monte Etna): y la voz de mi madre al ánimo

exhortándome a volver a la tierra (voz del

anonimato): viste túnica blanca de frente

túnica verde detrás (ilumina la luna su

negrura): acato su voz que me conmina

a volverme (río) a volverme (árbol) me

vuelvo (agalla) luz, rugosa (15-24)

The use of the word *"versículo"* at the beginning of the stanza serves as a key to understanding the poet's relation to his poetic verses and identity in exile. The term indicates a verse that does not contain a set rhyme or meter. For this reason, the poetic voice resists identity through marked boundaries expressed as '*una dirección*' and '*un lugar de origen*'. The element that cannot be resisted completely is the continuous movement, even in the context of a return. However, the notion of returning or '*volverme*', followed in the poem by the parenthetical words '*río*' and '*árbol*', emphasizes more a rotation of time evolving with experience and creation. Hugo Friedrich describes how language serves not to resolve but preserve the emotion in a poetic verse. Therefore, the tension of inflicted boundaries can acquire liberty with a '*versículo*'. Friedrich states:

> *De la misma manera que el poema se separó del corazón, la forma se separa del contenido. Su salvación sólo consiste en el lenguaje, mientras el conflicto del contenido permanece sin resolver . . . Baudelaire expresó a menudo el concepto de la salvación por medio de las formas . . . "El privilegio maravilloso del arte consiste en que al expresar artísticamente*

lo feo lo convierta en bello y que el dolor ritmado y articulado llene el alma de plácida satisfacción." (Friedrich 54)

Another poem selected from *Ánima* contorts the influence of deceased poets as figures that relive their passion of poetry through plagiarizing the experiences of a living writer. Kozer describes the power of past literary figures as aiding in his ability to construct meaningful poetry. The former poets invade Kozer's literary space and home by casting shadows through the voices of his parents and his own thoughts:

ALGUNOS POETAS muertos nos plagian.

Su negro abrazo nos ciñe.

Afincan, abren las fauces.

Recobran el don que perdieron.

Mis minutisas poseen.

Poseen mis saetas el calicó y la gualdrapa.

Se apropian de mi padre el sastre.

Marcan con jaboncillo (rojo) la casa del judío.

A mi madre bordando junto a un brocal usurpan.

De su útero extirpan mi voz la destejen.

Sus letras negras exudo la carcoma de sus palabras.

De sus plagios, yo. De su continuidad, mi muerte. (1-12)

The presence of the *"poetas muertos"* is an integration that the poem cannot resist. It transforms and embodies the identity of the living writer along with the memory of his mother and father until the writer's own death. The unforgotten experiences from

previous generations signal a life of transformation and interpretation that the poet allows as the combined components of his identity. Kozer concludes the poem in the following verses:

> *Ante la puerta de bronce con el guardián de caftán.*
>
> *Sombrero de castor (rapada, cabeza) otra puerta de bronce.*
>
> *Entre paréntesis me plagian los poetas muertos.*
>
> *Entre paréntesis revuelven mis estertores.*
>
> *De mis cenizas, resplandecen.*
>
> *Sus negros versos (témpanos, de carbón).*
>
> *Escoria este baile de máscaras los cubos de mis ideogramas*
>
> *(desbordados)* (15-19)

"*Los plagios*", or the plagiarisms, that filter into the poet's production correspond with Kozer's statement in our interview that in his works *". . . yo no soy yo . . ."*. The writer's identity dies, or becomes masked, by an evolving knowledge, attention, and reading of past poets. The poetry of Kozer is no longer the poetry of an exile. His verses reach not only the depths of his spirit, or anima, but that of his predecessors as well. The following response from Kozer in a separate interview gives a perspective of the characters in Kozer's poetry: *"Lo que pasa es que a esa imagen primaria, se yuxtaponen otras, y se yuxtaponen palabras, que es lo esencial: palabras. Estas hacen el poema, paulatina y rápidamente, casi sin darnos cuenta. Una palabra sucede a otra, convoca a la siguiente creando un olor, una atmósfera, una situación, un acontecimiento social…"* (Zapata 183). The juxtaposition of words to create great poetry coincides with Kozer's

relationship with his literary influences. His closed readings of international writers create an intimate relation where, similar to the juxtaposition of words, Kozer thrives in a great line of poets.

In the following stances of "Last will and testament" Kozer seeks the impression of our words that extends beyond the page, beyond the written image that evokes nostalgia, emotion, and creativity. It is a poem that testifies to his strength as a poet in exile stemming from an inclination to spark an intellectual drive through trials of uncertainty. As indicated by the title of the poem, Kozer relates a desire for his poetry to evoke his readers in thought and action. Words are energy and poetry serves as a mechanism to activate our emotions and realization of future possibilities:

> The truth is I only care about words, not every word (I don't care for
> the word word, if truth be told) . . .
>
> . . . what's left? The fugitive image of any word, lacking
> an image leaves a concept (leaping inside us) it
> crumbles: in truth I care not at all for the word nothing,
> abstractions: I want to see and touch (above
> all touch); I want to sniff the spoor of the word buck-
> wheat, my god, how many combinations: the words
> are mill-stones turning; whatever word a mill vane
> broken into syllables; and at the edge of dying,
> what does it say.

Things are obscured by so

much thought, classification and description, description doesn't bring the chameleon back to the

chameleon, doesn't bring back the mother, doesn't

bring back anything back to us, let's clear the way for the

jacaranda of this life, I am *homet* (the lizard): nothing.

(1-2, 9-11, 13-18, 27-32)

The poem is a call for activeness and discourages a passive acceptance of what the world claims to be. It is a call for independent thought and self-enhancement. Death is an imminent factor of life but Kozer presses the reader to celebrate the highs and lows of what makes us human. He discourages a focus on classifying our identity due to the fact that one must evolve and change with the modernity of our environment. Kozer explains these challenges in the chapter "The Bite of Exile" from *Remembering Cuba*:

> You leave the womb as you leave Eden, as you leave the Island. And live burdened by a vivid awareness that death has a hold on you; you meditate daily on death having a hold on you. . . . What can you do? Get the hell out. It makes you richer; it makes you poorer. In the dialectic of profit and loss, a Cuban Jew (me?) looks at the balance sheet. After thirty seven-years of "exile" (ok, I'll use the lousy word), the balance is positive. I gained in freedom, in experience, in "modernity". (Herrera 209)

One of the aspects a reader can admire of Kozer appears in the personal honesty and humble state of experience. He admits that his transition into exile proved difficult when learning English and never feeling completely at home after leaving Cuba. Another value for the poet becomes the freedom of experimentation, a requirement for an active, pragmatic spirit. The following commentary of Kozer instructs the approach, the passion, and the risk of writing poetry: *". . . quieras que no estás condenado a la palabra, a su estrechez; y desde esa estrechez, según conjugues la cosa, según poseas o no un cierto talento y una cierta dosis la libertad (que de eso se trata: de riesgo y libertad) harás el poema"* (Zapata 183). In the poem "Gift" Kozer returns to his identity that is tied with his native country of Cuba and the connections that forever binds us to our past. The poem immediately disregards the well-known quotation that "no man is an island" by John Donne (1572-1631) from Meditation XVII. In the year 1624, Donne writes:

> No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. (Donne 575)

Donne universalizes the experiences of isolation and death. Kozer affirms an individual sense of solitude within a separation that involves Cuba, an island isolated from others, and the physical separation of himself from the island. As Donne confirms that Europe

suffers with the loss of one of its own, Kozer would question Cuba's concern for mankind. His life and his story are that of a personal exodus:

> A man is an island, he strides his islets-guano. He tells his story to the
> air and descends to his Annunciation. By twisting
> the Word he becomes the First Person. I see him now,
> he embodies I, he's scared: shocked, panicked. (1-4)

The poem gains strength as Kozer directs the reader to observe that this case is not that of "mankind". It is his alone, it is solitary, and the ending will be what the poet desires of it. Kozer, like a floating island, recognizes life will continually present challenges to his life and poetry. His island is not just any island. It is Cuba, an island carrying a past of political and social turmoil and constantly working through its own isolation. His response, knowledge, is what keeps his island afloat. The poet's reaction calls for an educated approach in order to regain an educated perspective to confrontations of a modern world:

> A man
> isn't any island, he's Cuba: an island surrounded by
> water on all sides except the top: the jokes of the Old
> One were old before he was old, nobody listens.
>
> . . . I will place books in the path of
> each change, and at each disaster (its nature is such) I sit myself down to
> reread the books on my lap: I

am the attentive mother and the brood mare of

alphabetic distance: the letter producing the Island; the letter's shape

producing the Island's shape: a

man writes it and writes it til he dies. And death

bring him low; the top of the head dies, and he dies

from eyes to words to genitals. (5-17)

I conclude this chapter with the poem "Gift" because of a resonation it displays of a past (never forgotten), fears onset by isolation, and, above all, the strength of a reinterpreting a lifetime of experiences through words. At the beginning of the poem Kozer directs his reader's attention to the suffering of his parents and how his identity extends from his mother and father. The extension of pain and reform is carried through the generations, seeking an ability to feel whole and grounded after the uproot of exile. Kozer uniquely implements the notion of himself as ventriloquist to his parents signaling again the extension of communication. The poet cannot fully express his anguish and joy without communicating the inherited effects of exile passed down through his mother and father:

My father was chipped,

my mother staggered on two hollow canes, I'm both

their ventriloquists, my mouth closed, etc; let my

words fall into a torn sack. And through the rip in

the old drill of the sack in his name (in the name of

the Island) I'll smoke a cigar for the last time. (44-49)

The final verses of "Gift" reinstate the presence of Cuba in the poet's present and future. Kozer claims his position as mediator for his mother and father but this representation refuses to entrap or endanger the poet from the use of his poetry. The sack, representing the island of Cuba, bears characteristics of being torn and ripped similar to the world of Kozer. It is a broken world where Kozer celebrates, with his Cuban cigar, the "gift" of words, his "gift" of poetry. The final voice and final celebration will be that of the poet and not of the island.

Conclusion

The poetic works of José Kozer have demonstrated how an individual whose devotion to teaching, surviving, and writing in exile has evolved with knowledge of his past, recreating a path that sustains his growth in poetry and life.

After receiving an opportunity to talk with the poet, this dissertation includes Kozer's poetic themes such as : (1) the change of literary criticism in recent years, (2) the social and psychological transitions after exile, (3) the challenge of language in exile, (4) the role as mediator for the voices of the past, (5) literary influences and defining his own individual style, (6) the notion of poetry as salvation, and finally (7) the role of the reader. From this study, I believe that readers, instructors, and students of poetry will better observe the importance of language in the poetic discourse. His resistance to English did not exclude the language completely from his life but gave him enough knowledge to observe its effects on his Spanish and ultimately his poetry. His life with English was not a life worth pursuing with the realization that Spanish composed his life and that life is poetry. Kozer approaches his life in exile as he approaches the act of

writing. The direction can never be determined and risks are involved. The poem, like life, is a hybrid creation and, therefore, allows for multiple emotions and abilities to express creation. The poet describes this best in the following quote:

> I am Cuban. Only much later would I discover I accept that I am that, without ceasing to be what is other, the other: a Jew from the other side of the Jordan . . .) I'm already here, I can function. My use of language. That's my show. To write poems. Simulacrum, the poet. I have facts. I have instruments: only now it is something to obsess about: to work . . . And to set yourself to reinvent 'because paper can put up with everything'. (Sadow 85)

This chapter unfolds only three of many elements within the poems of Kozer: remembrance, resilience, and growth. However, it is through the development of "insightful remembrance", resistance of language deterioration, and a re-creation of personal values that enable Kozer to delight in experimentation of the Word. As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the study of his poetry is to study a movement, not only of time frames, but the ongoing negative and positive forces of exile. Exile can play the enemy of dislocating one's sense of self but it is also a freedom of experimentation. For Kozer, a life in exile is experimentation with language and poetry. This challenge becomes a valued asset for the poet and, ultimately, recovers and recreates a sense of worth amidst a life of confusion and uncertainty.

CHAPTER III

IDA VITALE: NOSTALGIA FOR THE FUTURE

"As long as thinking is not interrupted, it has a firm grasp upon possibility. Its insatiable, quality, the resistance against petty satiety, rejects the foolish wisdom of resignation"

-Theodor Adorno (Said 553).

The Uruguayan poet Ida Vitale reconstructs a life in exile with a sense of stoicism celebrating the production of intellectual thought through poetry that does not resign to age and withstands the changes of time. After leaving her country in 1973, Vitale continues the experience of exile in Austin, Texas writing with elements that engage her readers within labyrinths of time and abstract oppositions that give way to a positive motivation of creation. The chapter consists of three sections that include (1) Vitale's visualization and connection between the past, present, and future, (2) the transcendence of life and poetry in exile, and (3) the role of the intellectual and poet. The first section of my analysis will be supported by the studies of Walter Benjamin and Octavio Paz, which visualize connections within time so that the future and progress can be made visible through the deconstruction of the past. For the second portion, the challenging approach to Vitale's world of abstractness and opposition is best aided by Edward Said and Theodor Adorno who incorporate the growing importance of the role of the intellectual, even in a lost cause. The final segment concludes with, undoubtedly,

poetic examples of Vitale's self-enhancement and energized intellect aided by the social psychological studies of Howard Kaplan. In order to best perceive these elements, I have chosen the works by Vitale that were published after her exile in 1973, which convey an individualistic acceptance of past grievances and, also, an individualistic objective to seek growth and faith within the poetic lyric.

Ida Vitale, born in 1923, began her life in Uruguay as an only child, which, in turn, sparked a fascination with literature by creating a world in itself within books. Literature continued to play an essential role in Vitale's life and as she became an active writer for various literary magazines and the position as a literature professor. As part of the Generation of '45, Vitale participated in a movement that focused on literary critique and analysis while fueling debates and proposing the need for change by intellectuals. The movement included other writers such as Amanda Bereguer, Idea Vilariño Romani, and Ángel Rama. The following citation from a study of the Generation of '45 points to the evolvement of Ida Vitale from this movement to her forced exile in the seventies:

> *En el Uruguay de fines de los años sesenta, "ser intelectual" se convirtió casi en sinónimo de "ser de izquierda" . . . Pero lo que importa es que el corrimiento a la izquierda no fue únicamente un episodio en la vida privada de los intelectuales. Muchos de ellos sintieron que su tarea histórica era formar a las nuevas generaciones de ciudadanos y de militantes que conducirían al cambio político. El distanciamiento crítico que había caracterizado a los intelectuales de los años cuarenta fue*

sustituido por la figura del "intelectual comprometido. ("De la generación del 45")

In an effort to correspond with Vitale in regards to her personal experience in exile, I asked the poet about her association with the literary group, "la Generación del '45", with the following question: *¿Qué fue lo más importante que aprendió desde su participación en la Generación del '45 que siga utilizando en su escritura y en su crítica?* Vitale shares how her involvement can only be considered part of her overall growth as a writer while emphasizing the importance of confidence in defending what drives her creation[2]:

> *Como sea, supongo que cada escritor aprendió lo que más le iba a su naturaleza. Por ejemplo, me recuerdo fascinada con Girondo. En una reunión en que todos se reían de él y también, de paso de Ramón (Gómez de la Serna). Pero con otros amigos, judíos que me aceptaban como goy, leíamos inacabablemente a Macedonio Fernández. Quizás descubrir que leer era el único paraíso sin serpiente me hizo ecléctica, pero me sería difícil señalar qué "aprendí" para siempre en ese momento, fuera de eso. Quizás a admirar lo que me parece admirable, a defenderlo cuando eso tiene sentido, a ser escéptica ante las imposiciones que vienen de cualquier mayoría, y a confiar en mi gusto, que no me pone condiciones eternas.* (Vitale, Email interview)

[2] Email interview with Ida Vitale. 20 August 2012.

In the year 1973, Vitale and her husband, Enrique Fierro, were forced to flee Uruguay due to the growing political turmoil in the country. After relocating in Mexico, Vitale and Fierro were to pass the years of 1974 to 1984 in exile. During her stay in Mexico, Vitale was first introduced to Octavio Paz through his book *Libertad bajo palabra*. Vitale describes the impact of her friendship with Paz stating: *"Pero no solo fue un puente de lecturas, fue también un hombre de extaordinaria generosidad*. La luz de esta memoria *está escrito bajo su influencia. A pesar de que es un libro que siento lejano, en él ya hay un intento por romper con estructuras formales del soneto"* (Mociño 3).

Vitale and Fierro returned to Uruguay in a triumphant manner apart from other exiled writers who may encounter their return as a difficult transition. However, the complications of past memories and political conditions were not enough to support reestablishing a life in her native country. In the year 1989, Vitale and her husband, Enrique Fierro, moved to Austin, Texas, where Vitale continues to reside and write poetry. Fierro, who passed away in May 2016, taught in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin.

This dissertation connects Vitale's evolution of poetic creativity from the collections of *Sueños de la constancia*, *Procura de lo imposible*, *Reason Enough*, and *Garden of Silica*. Vitale maintains, and at times demands, the powerful effect of the intellectual and how the poet is driven by the desire to communicate the intellectual "thought" through poetry. The role of the intellectual, for other writers such as José Enrique Rodó and Octavio Paz, can be concerning if it does not demand a certain

intelligence towards our world. Paz explains in *El arco y la lira: "El hombre imanta el mundo. Por él y para él, todos los seres y objetos que lo rodean se impregnan de sentido: tienen un nombre. Todo apunta hacia el hombre. Pero el hombre ¿hacia dónde se apunta? Él no lo sabe a ciencia cierta. Quiere ser otro, su ser lo lleva simpre a ir más de allá de sí"* (Paz 179-180). The poetry of Vitale is divided among a series of sections that focus on themes which include: visualization of time, nostalgia, poetry in exile, and salvation through writing. In researching the works of a poet, one must consider the poet as a slave of their own thoughts due to the underlining obligation to produce and provoke ideas from a rhythmic sensation of words. This rhythmic structure, like that of musical lyrics, ignites an energy whether it be emotional or intellectual. Its constant movement produces the realization of the role of language in poetry to explore and to always remain undefined. Language can only develop when pushed through the movement of a modernized world. The rhythm of the world sparks a movement for language and words without limitations of expression. Vitale explains this process best by what she has learned throughout her career as a writer: *"Creo que hace bastante que me nutro de esa red de significaciones de las palabras que no están en la superficie del lenguaje, de ese fono secular que se pierde o se adormila. Nadie conoce todas las palabras de su idioma ni todos los sentidos de las palabras que cree conocer. Quizás una misión del escritor sea salvar un lenguaje que se empobrece, aunque ingresen a él nuevas palabras desde las técnicas que sí ganan terreno"* (Mascoró).

Nostalgia: A Poet's Visualization of Time

The idea of independent thought and intellectual power within Vitale's poetry separates itself from many other poets in that she does not attribute more success to her mere existence as a poet, but rather assigns an importance to an effect, generated by words, towards the reader. The exiled environment not only situates the individual writer physically outside of their norm but is also accompanied by a mental alienation. It marks an independent stance of idealism while creating value in the exile's work by resisting limits to production and expression. The poet encounters an undetermined moment of time. The poetic language of Vitale engages the reader towards the abstract as seen in her poem "Perspective"[3]. Vitale begins with a description of how the path of temptation leads individuals to hasten an answer to the abstract and the ease of drawing near to what satisfies our understanding:

> Toward the perspective,
> the surface becomes transparent,
> enameled design that pleasure the eye,
> table of temptations
> where the gaze runs fast
> to the invisible fountain
> of the seen.

[3] Poems that have been translated to English will be presented in order to allow readers who do not speak Spanish the opportunity to study the works of Ida Vitale.

A man searches for doors toward
eluding the contingency
that spies from this side of the cloth,
pledged to win a place
the onager would not prefer
nor terrors live;
he calls behind that infinite,
    attempts,
sliding hopeful lenses,
to discover and bring nearer
what is hidden,
what must be sustaining the miracle.
And only finds
The limit once again
and the inquiry. (1-22)

Following the idea of Charles Baudelaire, that great poetry ought to carry us towards that of the abstract, Vitale explains: "*Escribir es una especie de escapatoria. Si fuéramos totalmente felices nunca escribiríamos porque la felicidad es algo absorbente. La poesía, como la vida, se da en forma de mareas desoladas porque uno sabe que no van a volver"* (Mendoza Mociño 1). Within these layers of abstractness reside the memories and nostalgia that fuel the poetic creation of Ida Vitale. Her existence outside the realm of Uruguay creates an environment of ambiguity. Although Vitale and her

husband were able to work in their exile, the survival of poetic creativity remains subject to the writer and the writer's reaction towards a life redefined and transformed in exile. The individual identity of the poet has been removed from the familiar and must face a constant tension of memories and an unknown future. For poets like Vitale, it is a space of welcomed ambiguity, a realm that challenges the writer to reestablish the self towards an evolving intellectual purpose and the reality of life and death. This challenge breathes new life where the process cannot be viewed as a threat to poetry. The test of survival in ambiguity, ironically, marks the poet's view of life and death. The need to sustain life mirrors the need to produce poetry that stimulates insight and energy while in exile. It is a driven perspective that enables the poet to navigate with an intellectual purpose in an ambiguous state of life.

The issue of nostalgia within Vitale's writings evokes, like José Kozer, the studies of Walter Benjamin. Within the poem titled *"Exilios"* from *De procura de lo imposible*, the perception of the "exiles" connect to Benjamin's portrayal of "The Angel of History", a painting by Paul Klee. Benjamin proposes the past to hold varying levels of meaning without a definite origin. For both Benjamin and Vitale, memories can deceive but also function as an awakening to modernity that is not constricted by one's past. "The Angel of History" is described as follows:

> His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is

> blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." (Boym 29)

According to Benjamin, the angel, like many exiled individuals, finds he is unable to repair or retrieve what has been lost in the past. He envisions the storm as progress that deconstructs the past but has yet to reveal the future: "The angel can neither make whole the past nor embrace the future. . . .The angel of history freezes in the precarious present, motionless in the crosswinds, embodying what Benjamin called 'a dialectic at a standstill'" (Boym 29). Vitale creates an image of crossing the borders towards exile and the vast terrain that surrounds the individual upon leaving one's own home or country and entering a foreign atmosphere. The focus of the temporal space follows the image of the desert where the poet alternates between a glance directed back to the past, creating an illusion of return, and the displacement of the present time. Vitale describes this perspective of the exile in the following verses:

> *Cruzan desiertos que el bravo sol*
> *o que la helada queman*
> *y campo infinitos sin el límite*
> *que los Vuelve reales,*
> *que los haría de solidez y pasto*
> *La mirada se acuesta como un perro,*

sin siquiera el recurso de mover una cola.

La mirada se acuesta o retrocede,

se pulveriza por el aire

si nadie la devuelve.

No regresa a la sangre ni alcanza

a quien debiera.

Se disuelve, tan solo. (1-13)

The exiled individual feels lost within the *"campos infinitos sin el límite"* and is confronted with the reality that the "return" will not fill the internal void nor will it signify a liberty desired by the author. Vitale imposes a feeling of the abstract with gazes, or "miradas", that forever remain empty and unreturned. It begins to fragment the exile's world and conception of time. In the book *The Dialectics of Exile*, Sophia A. McClennen explains a fear the exiled writer faces of a fragmentation of one's self when entering a foreign land: "The poststructuralists argue that the exile should enjoy the absence of national ties and abandon the quest for home. The exile is heralded as the postmodern hero, a role model for the fragmented self. . . . Like modernist writing, the literature of exiles in the era of postmodernism also displays great fear of the splintered self" (McClennen 40). The splintered self could lead to a weakened ability to produce literature and a life that fails to grow from one's past. The poem suggests a fear of not returning, but at the same time recalls that the dissolving glance towards the past is not necessarily a representation of defeat for the individual self. Vitale refuses to allow isolation to fragment her life and work as she responds to the following question in an

interview: *"¿Qué placer puede tener la errancia, el asumirse como vagabundo? – ¿Por qué puede ser un placer? Puede ser un sufrimiento. Es muy difícil saber qué le hace bien a la poesía. La errancia sí tiene una ventaja indudable porque nos abre al mundo y la poesía registra el mundo. La palabra nunca puede estar aislada"* (Mendoza Mociño 2). Vitale allows every experience as a moment to broaden her perspective and ability to write meaningful poetry. She refuses to allow exile to separate her connection with the poetic verse and its positive influence to her survival in life and intellectual thought. Vitale allows suffering and error to enter into her life and, even more so her verses, without fear of possible repercussions. This behavior demonstrates a deviance to what threatens an exiled poet—a loss of meaning and love towards life and their poetry.

The nostalgic spirit of Vitale allows the reader to enter her domain of an "enclosed garden" where the writer already constructs a world of her own apart from reality and is formed, even since the days of her childhood, within a place of exile. For this reason, I would like to analyze various poems from the collection *Jardín de sílice*. Vitale chooses the garden as a key to understanding a poetic visualization of time and the question of one's being within a temporal space of life. Here, Vitale succeeds in writing poetry that defamiliarizes one from reality to a timeless state. Vitale proposes through her verses how poetry can explore a recuperation of the past: *"en el fondo es como si la poesía estuviera entre el pasado y el futuro. El presente, ya se sabe, no existe. Y también es una manera de prolongarse en el futuro que uno quiere. O de detener, o neutralizar un futuro nefasto. En el fondo, uno tiene que pensar que el tiempo es cíclico, como quería Borges"* (García Pinto 269). Vitale poses an idea that explains the process

and the importance of producing poetry that is not overcome by a fixed moment of time. Poetry serves as a gateway, or a medium, by which the past and future complement one another in a state of constant evolvement. As an exiled poet, Vitale must take an adaptive state through a temporal space.

This concept alludes to the idea that within the poetic language one does not encounter him- or herself in a time of the present because the goal of poetry does not derive itself from the present but a memory from the past which provokes action for the future. Through poetry, an individual transcends the ambiguous space where the past is viewed through various perceptions that shape our desires of what we need in the future. As Vitale concludes, poetry transmits a cycle in which the combination of certain words leads an individual towards certain memories of the past and directs one's glance onto a preoccupied state of our future.

The restructuring of an individual's understanding of texts and time is also presented within the critical essays of Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben. Agamben expands upon Benjamin's presentation of a "moment of knowability" in which an individual fully grasps an understanding of a text, an idea, etc.:

> Agamben's approach can then be understood only if one bears in mind that it implies that a "historical index" mysteriously governs "the now of knowability" of a given text, which as Agamben makes clear is "the absolute opposite of the current principle according to which each work may become the object of infinite interpretations at any given moment" . . . The constant shifting of perspective effected by historical change closes and opens lines of historical sight. Axes that had been blocked for centuries or

longer are liberated, and long-obscured elements suddenly come to the surface of the page. (de la Durantaye 113-114)

Vitale approaches the poetic verse guided by this notion of a "now of knowability" where expression and understanding unlocks multiple understandings among the perceptions of our past and the future of our thoughts. The Jewish writer Elie Wiesel also addresses the ties of the past and future when asked his interpretation of the words of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav: "*En Zakhor ela lealma deate* (there is only memory about the future world)" (Wiesel 228). To this Wiesel replies:

> The Talmud teaches that all the prophets really spoke only of the future. Nevertheless, they spoke only of the past. Addressing themselves to the Jews, they said, "Why have you disobeyed? Why have you sinned?" Basically, the prophets wanted to rectify the future . . . at a certain very elevated point in God's thinking, in God's memory, the past and the future are joined. We are free to concentrate on one or the other. When it is the past which weighs more heavily than the future and things are out of balance, it is up to us to correct it. The present, according to R. Nahman, is the stable balance between the past and the future. Thus, memory is a way of balancing. (Wiesel 228)

At the beginning of the poem *"Jardín de sílice"* Vitale directs our focus to the value of time within the first verse of the work. This verse reveals Vitale's prevailing sentiment in regards to the individual capacity to utilize or lose the time that remains in

one's life. The combination of movements directed to the future and the past form a cycle that encloses one's self within a "garden" of their world:

Ahora hay que pagar la consumición del tiempo,

sin demora,

gastado el arrebato

en andar por un jardín de sílice. (1-4)

The poet places importance on the purpose of life by exercising the act of remembrance and the acceptance of life's occurrences. Vitale guides the reader to think of the future and its inevitable encounters within oneself and roots. Her verses contemplate these crossroads where time stalls an individual from thinking and growing intellectually from the past. It is an environment shadowed from a distinct direction where the poetic verse can be weakened through stagnation:

Años vendrán para pacer palabras

como pastos oscuros

and ends the poem with images of a predetermined destiny by the past in expressing,

Vagos vagones Cruzan

hacia

un pasado que pulverize las raíces,

que alias el luto y nos despide. (5-10)

The final verse of *"Jardín de sílice"* alludes to the predetermined state in which the past can be perceived as the future and vice versa. Octavio Paz also conceptualizes this cyclical movement of time in *El arco y la lira*: *"Para el poeta lo que pasó volverá a*

ser, volverá a encarnar . . . Y reencarna de dos maneras; en el momento de la creación poética, y después, como recreación, cuando el lector revive las imágenes del poeta y convoca de nuevo ese pasado que regresa" (Paz 64). The comments of Paz relate an important function of poetry in that its cyclical movement engages the poet to profit from knowledge of the past, but it also communicates action, or rather a reaction, from the reader. Paz allows the poet and the reader something to gain by this perception. Poetry re-embodies itself and activates the need to work and reciprocate energy between the writer and reader. For Vitale, there exists a threat to return to the past, as expressed in the verse *"pulverize las raíces".* The return, therefore, holds the capacity to destroy the re-formation and re-growth of an intellectual vision derived from the experience of exile. We will continue to see how Vitale further marks the poet's view of the intellectual through the liberty of her poetic verses.

In the collection *Jardín de sílice,* Vitale continues the topic of cyclical time and reflects the problematic position of being an exiled author. The poem *"Zoon politikon"* emphasizes a process in which future desires always befall in the tragedies of the past. In the first stanza, Vitale describes the poet's essence as generating an effect, or the reflection of emotions, through the poetic language. She states in an article that only the poetic verse successfully transmits the experience of emotion: *"Se puede tratar el tema más angustioso, noble, pero si eso no está convertido en poesía, no funciona. No hay poesía si no hay una preocupación por el lenguaje. Lenguaje apoyado en experiencia"* (Rubio, "Marginan la poesía*"*4). The poet develops an environment of abstractness and surpasses the limits of a tragic reality in order to reaffirm the importance of one's self

from the reflection of one's mirrored image. The poem reflects the desire of transmitting the obstacle of escaping life's failures, fears, and the anguish of time so that the poetic language produces an instance of intellectual and emotional liberty. Vitale explains that this liberty persists only in poetry and that the role of language is to transmit emotions of life's experiences. Meaningful poetry cannot survive with ignorance and negation of oneself. Vitale's insistence to maintain a continual path of growth does not allow ignorance to limit her abilities as a writer and her capacity to acknowledge her self-worth:

> *Quisieras escribir al margen de combustiones*
> *y escalofríos,*
> *malezas que ametrallan*
> *y testimonios del fracaso de toda magia,*
> *remediando azogue roídos para que*
> *del otro lado del espejo se llegue*
> *a los jardines sin tormenta ni astucia,*
> *donde el té circular y los amigos íntimos lejanos.*
> *Quisieras convertir los pantanos en manantiales de limpio berro,*
> *izar la historia,*
> *red reptante donde tropiezas*
> *y te cubres de presagio amoratados.* (1-12)

The second stanza of this poem continues to define the poetic goal but also stresses one of the greatest problems for poets that is *"incultura",* or *"los pantanos".*

Vitale stresses an interest in the individual development of thought that should be considered critical, revolutionary, and marked by an inspiration to arrive at a new discourse. It is a discourse between the poet and the modern world, between the past and future, between ambiguous glimpses of nostalgia and the clarity of one's dreams. However, the poem concludes in an abyss that entraps the poet between the hope of change and a cycle predetermined by a past of violence and political anguish:

Pero sigues por arenales de sofocación hasta ningún fin,

A vararte en el horror prometido.

La espalda, triste signo,

Acata tables dictadas entre

Truenos y violencia.

Quisieras estar naciendo en edad de razón. (13-18)

In the final verse, Vitale expresses an inevitable frustration felt by the individual. At the same time, ambiguity lingers with the reader in order to welcome the existence of an enhanced, intellectual perspective. The ambiguity of Vitale mirrors how Octavio Paz explains the poem as an introspective search of our self: *"El lenguaje del poema está en él y solo a él se le revela. La revelación poética implica una búsqueda interior. Búsqueda que no se parece en nada a la introspección o al análisis; más que búsqueda, actividad psíquica capaz de provocar la pasividad propicia a la aparición de las imágenes"* (Paz 54). Most notably, Vitale identifies horror and sadness without ruling out a proposal of the hope of discovering a renewed inspiration that enters into the space of uncertainty, free of prejudices and violence.

Alongside the rhythmic movement of time, the poetry of exile brings forth the aspect of nostalgia. It aspires to encounter truth and exercise strength in the poetic language. Vitale describes the presence of nostalgia in her poetry in the following quote: *"A veces me ilusiono pensando que, con un imaginario lector, estamos creando un espacio de rescate para un mundo spiritual que a veces, en los días pesimistas pienso que está derrumbándose.* '*Sueño de una doctrina' . . . Pero, lo que aparece con más frecuencia es la nostalgia de lo perdido"* (García Pinto 272-3). Consistency is found in what we visualize as being lost or forgotten. It is a constant test of the poet's ability to find strength in the poetic creation and within a world that is forever in alteration. In the poetry collection *Sueños de la constancia* (1984), the sentiments of nostalgia question the intellectual growth of an individual from our experience by asking: What exactly have we learned from our past so that we may set out to achieve a renewed sense of self and life for the coming future? Vitale leads her collected poems and readers with this perseverance as the very title *Sueños de la constancia* includes a determination that is both personal and public. On a personal level, Vitale enable her state of exile to expand her own expressions as a writer. Publicly, Vitale urges readers of every age to exercise a continual practice to learn and grow individually and intellectually. While visiting the University of Monterrey in September of 2015, Vitale suggested the importance of reading various texts: *"Creo que hay que leer mucho, sobre todo, leer cosas que se oponen; para no caer en una, es bueno leer muchas; para que, de todo aquello, una cosa borre la otra, y por ahí salga algo más o menos personal" ("Leer mucho").* It reflects her own will to persevere and a will placed in the minds of her audience.

For Ida Vitale, the reflections of nostalgia signal the importance of ambiguity and the unknown serves as a positive challenge and self-enhancement for the writer. The poet relates this process in the following citation: *"Pienso que cuando todo es perfecto, cuando todo está hecho, el lector es solo un mero contemplador abrumado. La perfección es un círculo cerrado ¿O no?. . . La poesía es algo lo que apenas se puede pretender llegar. Es decir, es un propósito"* (García Pinto 264). In the following paragraphs, the role of nostalgia demonstrates acceptance of the conditions of separation within exile. In the poetry collections titled *De procura de lo imposible* y *Reducción del infinito*, the poet dedicates a variety of themes to the poetic verse that includes the memory of the mother country and labyrinths of obscurity. Again the titles of these collections identify an apparent opposition of seizing the function of the unknown expressed as *"imposible"* and *"infinito"*. One feels the tension and the impossibility of escaping the past where its enclosure threatens hope and liberty. For Vitale, liberty may be threatened but it is not impossible for the poet. The poet, we must remember, is freed by the act of writing and producing a poetic verse. The feelings Vitale expresses show a process that situates the individual in an abyss of abstraction due to the remembrance of one's native home beneath a nostalgic light and the acceptance of the unknown.

"Against deceit" represents a poem in which Vitale exposes, in her words, the "rigor" of solitude and the choices that lie before us while the past continues to provoke confusion, loss, and stagnation. Vitale draws the reader to perceive the danger of blinding our perspective with romanticized images of the past. Memories evoke a contrast of images where the more positive occurrences are highlighted and the struggles

and pain remain in the shadows. The desire to dwell before these distorted images of the past delays the exiled writer from a renewed poetic creation:

> The guardians of nostalgia
> recall the days of gold
> !with the expiatory deck of cards
> of sepia blood and chiaroscuro.
> If the sum of bridges sings,
> the rain of time weeps for them
> and concurs with cathedrals
> drowned in sightless wines. (1-8)

The second half of the poem redirects the reader from suffering and misconstrued nostalgic images. The past remains guarded in its time and the poetic voice fills life with glasses of lyrical creation instead of "sightless wines" that impede intellectual thought. Vitale poses a test of the writer to produce and continually create even if it is to occur in exclusion and solitude:

> Better, with the images behind us, to test the glass of verses
> with the rigor of solo being.
> And if they're dying of falsehoods,
> if another rain of time weeps for them,
> impose penance on them, even if later
> we may wander an empty field. (9-14)

The poem highlights a life chosen away from "falsehoods". It is a solitary act of continuance that redefines emptiness from a negative connotation. Vitale concludes that in choosing solitude and exclusion apart from false images to an "empty field", one can reemerge and recreate. Emptiness is not discouraged. For the poet, it holds the possibility of recreation and, most importantly, liberty. In Vitale's case, her exile includes a moment of return to Uruguay but the environment held too many remembrances of the past. It is this decision to live apart, returning to a life in exile, that allows Vitale to thrive even though it may be an individual act that is always accompanied by solitude.

The following two poems titled "Recreational" and "The Hunt, Infinite?" demonstrate one of the unique qualities Vitale brings to the poetic verse. Each poem emphasizes the unending paths of labyrinths and time with a play of words that juxtapose opposing forces. The numerous alterations portrayed with time can also be explained through the thoughts of Giorgio Agamben. "Agamben begins with a characterization of the Greek conception of time as fundamentally cyclical, pointing to Plato's famous assertion (in Timaeus) that "the creator of the world constructed a moving image of eternity" . . . "Western man's inability to master [*padroneggiare*] time, and his consequent obsession with 'gaining' it and 'passing' it," writes Agamben, "have their origins in this Greek concept of time as a quantified and infinite continuum of precise fleeting instants" (de la Durantaye 95-96). The poem "Recreational" utilizes the image of a well to entrap us in a circular world where the success of escape seeks an

immeasurable calculation. Vitale easily entraps our vision and surroundings with a struggle of energy between the constraints of time, labyrinths and hopes, dreams:

> Supposing we're at the bottom
> of an imaginary well;
> that this well has height,
> a rim, the sky beyond
> for the one who can reach it;
> and assuming
> it holds a contents
> of stiffened hopes,
> determine the time
> that must pass
> so that whomever is
> deepest down in it
> makes it all the way up.
> Formulate the answer
> in viable dreams,
> labyrinth endings,
> volatile illusions.
> Calculate as well
> the energy lost
> each time one again

bottoms out. (1-10)

Vitale succeeds in creating an urgency to escape toward clarity by encasing the reader within the tension of enclosing walls of the well. Time is in a continuous momentum, spiraling within the energetic structure of the well. The poet creates yet another test of ambiguity with opposing images of "stiffened hopes" and "labyrinth endings". The written commands of "determine . . . formulate . . . calculate" reflect a constant battle of time and energy towards the discovery of the truth. However, Vitale ends the poem with a message that life will never hold an exact calculation of how to achieve clarity. In the poet's experience of exile, there exists no ultimate formula or answer for success due to the consistency of change. What remains is a consistency of perseverance.

Before bringing this chapter to the following section of the poet's acceptance and transcendence of life in exile, I would like to direct the reader's attention to a poem titled "The Hunt, Infinite?". It is this work that portrays the poet's struggle outside of her country and apart from family and friends. The poetic voice sets the reader in isolation with environments of islands, labyrinths, and mazes. However, Vitale combines hope in conjunction with the feeling of isolation. It is a hope, a possibility, of self-enlightenment amid the emptiness of mystery and dreams. Individual creativity and the search for truth will never encounter a determined ending. It is in an ever-changing cycle we must continue to accept as that of the abstract. Octavio Paz describes this cycle in *El arco y la lira: "El tiempo afirma el sentido de un modo paradójico: posee un sentido–el ir más allá, siempre fuera de sí—que no cesa de negarse a sí mismo como sentido. Se destruye*

y, al destruirse, se repite, pero cada repetición es un cambio. Siempre lo mismo y la negación de lo mismo. Así nunca es medida sin más, sucesión vacía" (Paz 57).

Islands:
so much clearness is mystery.
Tunnels cross them,
dynamited labyrinths
to be reborn of themselves,
mazes with bull and dreams
and insatiable Theseus from the myth
and Ariadne who one day begins
the always
eternal
reading of truth
that
fabled, circular in the waters escapes,
fixed to the shore of a beginning,
of a closed infinite closed. (1-15)

Life in Exile is a Life in Transcendence

The energy Vitale produces through her nostalgia and survival within ambiguity produces a marked vigor in her verses. For the poet, the concept of return is presented by the author in order to relay a personal voyage back to Uruguay various times after her

exile. The question arises: What does one return to when the experience of exile produces a nostalgic effect of the perception of one's native country? One discovers the reality of a country that continues to lack stability. The fantasy of return may clash with the reality of an environment that continues to suppress political liberty and the written word. In the presentation of *"El exilio inverso",* Vitale approaches the concept of return for the exile with warnings of self-destruction that can lead the writer further from hope and creativity*: "Pero puede ocurrir que pasados los años y llegado el esperado momento del regreso, la falta de comunicación reaparezaca con rasgos más constantes y virulentos. Entonces se vuelve intolerable, casi mortal si no nos defendemos. Porque estamos perdiendo lo que siempre nos había sostenido: la esperanza"* (Vitale, Email interview). Therefore, the poet Vitale enables a *"regreso"* in the act of writing poetry which represents a welcoming environment and a liberty to continue battling the limits of any defining space. Vitale defines the discovery of poetry as an ideal terrain in the poem *"Obstáculos lentos":*

Si el poema de este atardecer
fuese la piedra mineral
que cae hacia un imán
en un resguardo hondísimo;
si fuese un fruto necesario
para el hambre de alguien,
y maduraran puntuales
el hambre y el poema. Si fuese el pájaro que vive por su ala

si fuese el ala que sustenta al pájaro…si a los helechos de hoy

- no los que guarda fósiles el tiempo -

los mantuviese verdes mi palabra;

si todo fuese natural y amable . . .(1-12)

Vitale attributes the life of the poem as a way of sustaining the hunger of the soul and an eternal symbol of nature. While the poet writes the verse *"los mantuviese verdes mi palabra"*, the reader observes how Vitale associates the concept of maintaining time by means of the poetic creation that also supports the cycle of life. Octavio Paz speaks of the interrelation of time with the rhythm of the poetic voice in the following passage: *"El tiempo no está fuera de nosotros, ni es algo que pasa frente a nuestros ojos como las manecillas del reloj: nosotros somos el tiempo y no son los años sino nosotros los que pasamos. El tiempo posee una dirección, un sentido, porque es nosotros mismos"* (Paz 57). The poem continues with the uncertainty that characterizes life and causes us to develop a vision of the past:

Pero los itinerarios inseguros

se diseminan sin sentido preciso.

Nos hemos vuelto nomads,

sin esplendores en la travesía,

ni dirección adentro del poema (13-17).

The poem's conclusion indicates an ambiguity of direction towards one's destiny. The poet's presentation of *"El exilio inverso"* alludes to the unsettling force of the "unknown" within the world around us and within ourselves. Vitale suggests that the

perceptions of the outside world must not support a continuous single view, but tolerate a reformation that begins in the perception of our place in that world. Vitale knows and accepts the inexistence of her return to Uruguay but allows room for a continuous love of her homeland. Change is inevitable and her strength as a poet must follow that change and exercise adaptation and growth throughout all stages of life:

> *Supe que había un período cerrado sobre el cual no debía volver. Lo que no estaba cerrado ni lo está es el desajuste, al que metafóricamente aludo, entre la realidad externa y la que llevamos dentro, no solo en forma de recuerdo sino de vivencia difícil de desarraigar, ya que ella legitima nuestro amor por esa parte del mundo que consideramos propia. Pero el mundo varía sin cesar, todo y cada una de sus artes. Y nosotros, lejos, cambiamos también.*
>
> *Vuelan fronteras de un país*
> *cuyo falso centro está en nosotros*
> *que quién sabe dónde estemos.*
> *El norte está en el sur,*
> *este y oeste se confunden,*
> *el sur se pierde en bruma*
> *y dentro lo más vivo es la mentira*. (Vitale, Email interview)

The verses that follow Vitale's discussion allow the reader to witness a writer that has committed to a continual intellectual maturity within her verses through a mindset of understanding that change is inevitable. For Vitale, that which we hold within

and consider true is an evolving state of self-awareness, self-enhancement, and poetic production. As seen in the previous comments of Paz, Vitale also lends time and the role of a poet to a permanent state of transcendence that battles a stagnant position of intellect and growth.

The poem entitled *"Patrimonio"* from *Reducción del infinito* further opens Vitale's vision of the individual marking one's future while struggling with the risks and entrapment of time. Initially, the poem states the significance of one's responses in life but quickly cautions the repercussion of inner sadness and hate that can result from rejection or ignorance. Furthermore, the reader captures the poetic voice in a state of limited control and un-resolve amid the outside world and one's own self-perception. Vitale writes:

Sólo tendremos lo que hayamos dado.
¿Y qué con lo ofrecido y no aceptado,
qué con aquello que el desdén reduce
a vana voz, sin más
ardiente ántrax que cree,
desatendido, adentro?
La villanía del tiempo
el hábito sinuoso
del tolerar paciente,
difiere frágiles derechos,
ofrece minas, socavones, grutas:

oscuridad apenas para apartar vagos errores -

El clamor, letra a letra,

del discurso agorero

no disipa ninguna duda;

hace mucho que sabes:

ninguna duda te protege. (1-17)

The poem then warns us of tolerating injustices and mistruths for too long when the reality of neglecting these horrors only surrounds one in darkness and inescapability within *"minas", "socavones"* and *"grutas"*. It is evident that the last verse of *"Patrimonio"* reflects the incapacity to neither control one's destiny nor acquire the perspective of his or her homeland that is adopted through nostalgia. This message ends with the fact that the poet acknowledges the abyss of exile but seeks the determination to not consider one's self a victim of time. Time can be overrun with doubts that disable an individual from progression. Vitale's poetic voice pursues the development of an identity reborn from a past of haunting memories knowing doubt will always exist as a part an undetermined and unprotected destiny.

These final verses play around the term *"duda"* or the doubts that continually disable the feeling of wholeness and recovery. Vitale marks a mature intellectual understanding of time by revealing our innocence and weakness to its constant power. The poem denotes the continuous opposition of the threatening consequences of hatred and vengeance clamoring with finding peace and clarity. One would not find solace

without experiencing struggle. In a state of exile, the individual thrives because of the weaknesses that re-emerge into strengths. Here Vitale addresses this notion:

> *Algunos sabemos que los seres humanos arrastran una tradición oscura, que nadie es inocente; que las visiones dantescas cargadas de odio, de juicios que se quieren irrefutables, plantean una abrumadora pregunta: ¿estamos tan seguros de que no podríamos haber sido, en alguna circunstancia, el infierno de otros? . . . Padecen aquellas visiones de un rango bastante siniestro que las marca a todas por igual: forman parte de un tiempo que todo hace pensar que nunca dejaremos atrás, el tiempo del odio, de la cobranza, del inexplicable derecho de las víctimas a serlo eternamente para los siglos venideros, mientras se preparan para victimar a su vez, en un ciclo de odio que como es bien sabido, solo el hombre ejecuta en el reino animal.* (Vitale, Email interview)

These powerful words of Vitale direct our attention to the difficulty an exile faces when surrounded by prejudices, injustices, and discrimination that begin in their native country and possibly continue in that of a host country. Vitale warns of the vicious cycle of hatred by asking—Would we reciprocate this behavior towards those who discriminate against us and make their suffering equal to our own or even worse? Sophie McClennen explains a hypothesis of Edward Said that observes the cyclical oppositions presented by an exiled writer: ". . . exile literature fears dystopia and seeks utopia is not a new observation." Edward Said explains that "much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule . . .

Instead their work presents the reader with both visions of the future as the most potentially 'shocking' way to demonstrate the crisis of cultural identity" (McClennen 197). Vitale integrates these visions, as seen in the poem *"Patrimonio"* and her own commentary, in order for her readers to envision how easily the cycle of hatred and victimization can fall prey to the cycle of time. The poet, as we all, lives in this cycle while surviving for a future that intellectually can thrive from that of the abstract.

Therefore, one may never formulate an exact path and understanding of his or her own identity, and it is precisely this constant search that feeds a maturity within the poet's writings. I would like to direct this topic of living in exile, equating it to living in transcendence with a study of Edward Said. In the citation stated in the previous paragraph, Said proposes that a writer effectively depicts the perplexity of cultural identity, while in exile, through images of danger and hope for the future. Indeed, the poetry of Ida Vitale succeeds to transfer the feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity of one's destiny. The knowledge and acceptance of the past guides the poet to recreate and redirect even among the risk of loss and pain.

In his book *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said devotes a chapter, entitled "On Lost Causes", to the writer's will to continue fighting for their causes and beliefs. I found that the poems "One chooses", "Chapter", and "Still Canto" highlight how Vitale envisions life in poetry and life in exile. These works are accompanied by the arguments of Theodor Adorno and Edward Said in which the role of the writer as an intellectual takes precedence. Said speaks of the process of confronting injustices and hatred with the knowledge that this fight will not bring absolute resolution or security: "There is no

sound, no articulation that is adequate to what injustice and power inflict on the poor, the disadvantaged, and the disinherited. But there are approximations to it, not representations of it, which have the effect of punctuating discourse with disenchantment and demystifications. To have *that* opportunity is at least something" (Said 526). In the poem titled "One chooses" Vitale's message parallels the value Said associates with the opportunity of self-reflection through writing and striving to be an intellectual. Vitale opens the first half of the poem through a bold acceptance and strife to continue in her vocation despite occurrences of the past. The poet would change nothing. As a poet, producing thoughts in a lyrical voice and provoking emotion through the written word is what she is meant to do:

> Decimated
> blood-let,
> cut in as many pieces
> as dreams,
> I want,
> nonetheless,
> this and no other way
> of living;
> this and no other way of dying;
> this fright
> and no longer the habitual
> half-sleep. (1-12)

Vitale moves from acknowledging the trials of exile to a desire of welcoming the challenge. Hardships have only made her self-worth and poetic abilities stronger. This self-worth, in life and death, surpasses fears and a faltering passion to change with the world. Said points the reader to realize how a cause can be bigger than an individual and, therefore, the setbacks a person experiences are considered a sacrifice for something greater: "The word 'cause,' after all, acquires its force and hearing from the sense we have that a cause is more than the individual; it has the significance of a project, quest, and effort that stand outside individuals and compel their energies, focus their efforts, inspire dedication. . . . To rise in the world, that motif of self-help and personal betterment, is routinely attached to the good of the community and the improvement of one's people" (Said 529-530). Vitale connects to the energy Said proposes towards an objective to improve one's outlook on life personally but also the enhancement of understanding on an intellectual level the forces that energize our productivity by means of sacrifice. Vitale concludes the poem "One chooses" with the opposing energetic force of shadows and burning light that continually reform our identity.

> Like a shadow of oneself.
>
> or like violent phosphorous burning.
>
> There is no other alternative,
>
> nor further identifying sign.
>
> No other death.
>
> No other life. (13-18)

The final images in the poem exemplify an internal self-conflict through shadows, or the dark images of one's self, met with a burning light to labor the intellectual. While a life in exile is dominated by ambiguity, the poetic voice must exercise self-awareness without any remarkable sign of clarity. Vitale concludes with verses that solidify a purpose to stimulate a sense of self-awareness through the abstract and unknown in not only her self but her readers as well. The greatness of death can only be equal to the greatness of life—a transcendental life of poetry.

The poem "Chapter" from *Reason Enough*[4]*,* further mobilizes the reader through verses that transition movement within the past, present, and the unforeseen. The poem presents the majority of its verses in "all caps" that seek an overpowering and dominating declaration of our identity and destiny. She recently commented to students at the University of Monterrey*: "Pero (la poesía) tiene que corresponder también o acompañarse de otra cosa, de una necesidad interior, una necesidad de expresar algo, que no tiene que ser necesariamente una idea, aunque deba parecer como una idea" ("Leer mucho").* Vitale marks the importance of poetic transcendence by not only actively promoting the studies of opposing texts but producing texts that engage readers in constructive thought:

> WHERE AT LAST IT IS REVEALED
>
> WHO I WAS
>
> WHO I AM,

[4] *Reason Enough* is a collection of poems by Ida Vitale that have been translated by Sarah Pollack in order to introduce Vitale's poetry into the literary world of English speakers.

MY FINAL RESTING PLACE,

WHO YOU ARE, WHO YOU WERE,

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION,

THE COURSE THAT WE TAKE,

THE WIND THAT WE BEAR,

AND WHERE IT IS DECLARED

THE PLACE OF THE TREASURE,

THE IRIDESCENT FORMULA

THAT CLEARLY

EXPLAINS TO US THE WORLD.

But then the chapter

was never written. (1-15)

The poem concludes with the abstract opposition of an "irridescent formula" that can never be completely understood not only by the reader, but also the poet. For Vitale, the "chapter" is a constant unknown as she explains*: "Para mí la poesía es eso que está lejos y que una trata de alcanzar aunque se le escapa de sus manos…La verdad es que estoy en contra de la poesía programática. No creo en su eficacia. Mis poemarios son abiertos. Su unidad está en el lenguaje empleado, porque uno puede decir cualquier cosa pero no de cualquier modo. La clave está en buscar la palabra precisa y no abusar de los recursos ornamentales"* (Ojeda 2). "Chapter" closes with irony, an opening to possibilities, and the abrupt realization that our "chapter" or life is in constant motion.

The majority of the poem's verses set out for a lyrical domination stating a certainty of identity, destination, and an understanding without question.

This poem, as with the theory of Theodor Adorno, appropriately answers Said's questioning of the actuality of a lost cause: "Must it always result in the broken will and demoralized pessimism of the defeated?" (Said 553). Adorno, as Vitale with her poetry, "posits as an alternative to resigned capitulation of the lost cause the intransigence of the individual thinker whose power of expression is a power—however modest and circumscribed in its capacity for action or victory—that enacts a movement of vitality, a gesture of defiance, a statement of hope whose 'unhappiness' and meager survival are better than silence . . ." (553).

The reader finds this alternative of power in the final verse of "Chapter" as Vitale abruptly changes the force and boldness of words from all caps to a normal text. The strong emphasis placed on ideas of identity, destination, and the formula for life is in constant motion. The poet conceives the incomplete chapter not as lacking possibilities but alludes to an "iridescent" light, a prismatic perception of identity and the future only achieved through the power of thinking and writing. Vitale's abrupt changes in the final two verses break not only the physical power of the words in all caps but leaves her readers with the notion that life's chapters are open and never programmed for clarity.

The previous poems, "One chooses" and "Chapter" now set our attention to the poet's strength of creating a lyrical opposition and the resistance to a diminished sense of intellectual liberty. Vitale refuses to back down within her exile and reaches a stage of gracious maturity knowing that resistance through writing is the power to overcome the

threats of her confinement in isolation. The poem "Still Canto" is the key example of how Vitale directs her readers towards a never-ending presence of obstacles:

> No matter the dazzling sun,
> *a minute after midday*
> *it is already night,*
> for dark times impose
> doubtful future clarity.
> The world reveals treacherous, larval
> traits, clouds the clear.
> The channel overflows,
> impiousness embraces you threateningly
> and it is arduous
> to gather any inheritance.
> You scrape in your private end of an era:
> blind history freezes. (1-13)

The opposing presence of threats and safety play against one another as Vitale opens the poem with the light of the sun contrasted by darkness, doubts, and clouds. Change and doubt quickly contaminate what one faithfully believes to know as truthful. Vitale situates the reader in a constant, ambiguous battle to seek a visible future and to have a sense of liberty. Clarity is described as frozen, as if unattainable and irreparable. The poem continues:

> How to be more when less reigns!

You keep in your hand then,

talisman, phylacteries,

not a pebble, a still canto

where your soul can ignite. (14-18)

This final declaration should draw the reader's attention to the acceptance, with exclamation and not questioning, of what the poet knows to be her objective and will. "To be more" is to promote the role of the intellectual and empower, with the "still canto", the resistance against prejudices and blindness of past offenses. The words of Adorno remind us that "As long as thinking is not interrupted, it has a firm grasp upon possibility. Its insatiable quality, the resistance against petty satiety, rejects the foolish wisdom of resignation . . . Consciousness of the possibility of resistance can reside only in the individual will that is fortified by the intellectual rigor and an unabated conviction in the need to begin again . . ." (Said 553).

The Proper Attitude of the Intellectual

After examining the poems "One chooses", "Chapter", and "Still canto" Vitale places herself, as well as her readers, among warnings of how easy one falls prey to what she terms "impiousness" or a disrespect towards the self and humanity. The poet also poses the power of self-growth through intellectual resistance in the face of hatred and solitude. As Said and Adorno propose, the challenge requires the individual to stand apart, isolated, and exalt recreation and strength of the intellectual. The proper attitude of the intellectual involves some sort of defiance. In order to examine this process and

importance of deviance, Howard Kaplan demonstrates the possibility of self-enhancement through deviant behavior. For various exiled writers, such as Ida Vitale, the behavior, or intellectual creativity, deviates from a perceived normative expectation of writers that was governed and administrated through the government or militia of their home country. The behavior and intellectual stance of Vitale aligns with Kaplan's definition of deviance:

> Deviant behavior is said to have occurred when a person (by his own judgment and the judgment of other group members a member of a specified group) fails to conform to the normative expectations of the group. This failure may be due to the person's loss of preexisting motivation to conform to normative expectations, or to his acquisition of motivation to deviate from normative expectations. (Kaplan, *Deviant Behavior* 5-6)

The "course" of Vitale's poems discussed in this chapter unveils the necessary self-reflection and self-evaluation that enable the poet to cope within the state of exile. To understand the deviance of Vitale, one must consider the behavior as a resistance to conform to the societal expectations, governed in Uruguay, of a writer's position facing the political and social turmoil of the country. Kaplan views actions like that of Vitale as a deviant behavior that resists conforming to a system that does not match their own values and definition of self-worth. In exile, the poet will seek value and acceptance in a different membership group that shares a passion for writing, and cultivates an environment of intellectual growth.

As we examine the final poems selected for this study, one begins to capture the significance of Vitale's deviance for the purpose of self-enhancement and exaltation. Vitale's exile does not mark her initial step of defying the political and social norms of Uruguay. Her involvement and publications with literary organizations, along with the development of her own poetic voice, block the possibility of self-devaluation. This allows Vitale to revere her intellectual impact as a positive self-attribute. Kaplan clarifies the transition of deviant behaviors towards self-enhancing attitudes, stating:

> . . . deviant behavior directed against society (or parents, peers, or social institutions) might serve as symbolic rejection of the standards associated with these targets by which the subjects have to devalue themselves . . . Thus, successful aggression might symbolize not only the nullification of the standards by which the subjects have failed but at the same time their own supremacy over those standards. Not only do the subjects destroy the basis for their self-devaluation, but they provide evidence of their own potency that belies their previously felt impotence. (Kaplan, *Deviant Behavior* 176).

Therefore, a writer's deviance, as shown by Vitale, permits the possibility of hope and growth through the appropriation towards the values of the intellectual. While defiance allows the poet an opportunity for self-enhancement, it is crucial to remember that it cannot restrain all criticism and hardships. The poems "This world", "Cocoon", "Psalm", and "Gratitude" serve as a guide as to how the poet, with continuing intellectual

production, can generate feelings of self-enhancement and sustain the power of hope within an environment of ambiguity.

The poem "This world" recreates the characteristic oppositions of Vitale's work while marking a newly established control by a voice in first person. It is a voice of power that takes responsibility of its present condition and acknowledges beauty in its constant change. Vitale transports her readers to a desolate environment knowing that life cannot be trusted or fully understood. Amidst these tribulations the poetic voice survives with patience and humility:

> Only I accept this illuminated world
> certain, inconstant, mine.
> Only I exalt its eternal labyrinth
> and its safe glow, although it may be veiled.
> Awake or among dreams
> I walk its grave earth
> and it is its patience in me
> flowering.
> It has a deaf circle,
> limbo perhaps,
> where blindly I await
> rain, fire
> unleashed.
> At times its light changes,

is hell;

at times, rarely, paradise. (1-16)

Immediately Vitale establishes the poetic voice as isolated, but more importantly, unequaled in bearing and acknowledging the uncertainties of the world. As in many other poems, a labyrinth appears to emphasize stages of shifts and restlessness experienced by the poet. Interestingly, one may notice how Vitale plays with the aspect of light within this poem. The beginning verse identifies the world as "illuminated", but is this light only a sign of safety and hope?

The poetic voice directs readers to its existence of light however this illumination is not always clear, thus mirroring the abstractness of our own future. Vitale exposes a conflicting imagery that alternates between a "safe glow" and the light of hell, a "fire unleashed". Within this constant alternation of illumination, Vitale sustains a poetic voice that becomes conscious of the need to reestablish the self in order to remain powerful, intelligent, in its world. These final verses reinstate the poet's power of the self in her exile as she, and only individually, can encounter the change to defy the isolation of her thoughts and seek the hope of self-enlightenment:

Someone could perhaps

half open doors,

see beyond

promises, successions.

Only I in it live,

await it

and there is sufficient wonder.

In it I am,

remain,

would be reborn. (17-26)

In the final verses, the poetic voice suddenly makes reference to an unidentified person that represents the alternative to the poet's identity and self-worth. However, it is a brief thought that only returns the poet in a steady recognition of a journey is personal and determined only by the self. Vitale guides the reader through this self-enhancement through a repetition of "Only I" and verbs that claim the present actions of "accept", "exalt", "live", "await", "am", "remain", and finally, "reborn". In an interview with Lorenzo García Vega, Vitale describes her poetry by stating: *"se mueve en un doble juego: doble juego entre la experimentación y las formas clásicas, que da como resultado un lenguaje paradójico por ser extrañamente callada, y a la vez saltarinesco; así como paradójico por acercarnos a las sensaciones fantasmales pero, a la vez, a aquello que, apuntando durante el día, lo podemos considerar como lo real"* (García Vega, *El alquímico*).

Vitale's experimentation within poetry develops as well in one of her finest poems, "Cocoon". It is an intriguing poem that can change with each reading. As with her other poems, Vitale permits the reader to determine the message and/or feeling of the poem without restricting the words to a closed reading, ultimately, breaking interpretations free from a "cocoon". In a previous quote, Vitale explained that her

intention of writing does not fit a programmed style. This objective not only stems from her approach to poetry but resembles her life's personal course in exile.

When you say: *words*
what space are you closing?
when you think: *slowly, you will soon arrive*
where?:
when in shadow's tone
someone distantly murmurs:
you burn walled-in,
it is the only thing you hear.
And not what it is made of
this frozen cocoon
woven around you,
exact augur of electricities,
good, bitter conductor (1-13)

The first verses immediately place the reader in the well-known enclosure of Vitale's labyrinth effect as well as breaking the binds with an open question—"where"? The lack of answers to these initial questions signifies a greater possibility to interpreting life and poetry. In the verse "you burn walled in" Vitale opens the reader to multiple readings of a sensation that could power hatred and uneasiness or a reaction that provokes a poetic "canto". This burning feeling is abruptly entrapped by what Vitale now describes as a "frozen cocoon". The poet envisions an environment, similar to that

of the isolation of her exile, which attempts to paralyze thought and growth. However, the final verses signify production as Vitale transforms the cocoon into a "conductor", feeding the need to react beyond set limitations. Through her experience of exile, Vitale gives the reader, and her poetry, an openness to allow for self-enhancement and growth. Growth does not equate to a complete understanding of what is questioned, but rather the willingness to be burned, positively and negatively, by our environment. Vitale speaks of self-enhancement without complete discernment by stating: "I don't feel comfortable reasoning it out, but I know it's something I need. I suppose it's a way of getting to know myself and to know the world, of understanding the incomprehensible. I think that what I don't understand, I understand better when I write. And when I say 'write,' I refer to the actual activity of writing . . . The poem is a form that I need to see and that almost always goes through numerous transformations" (García Pinto 238).

Strength found in the unknown and unanswered appears as well in the poem "Psalm". Vitale reveals there is value in uncertainty and instructs a hopeful proposition to live where others may criticize. "Psalm" evokes the reader toward self-enhancement attitudes in which Vitale praises intellectual growth in uncertainty and enjoying beauty in the abstract. Vitale could not offer such hopeful insight without experiencing the benefits of overcoming a life of continual opposition. She invokes this hope through terms such as "praise" and "believe" that combat the "inconceivable" of exile. Where many writers fear the journey of exile, Vitale understands and praises the beauty it can create:

Praise what you do not know

because of your hope

and even your look of today

believer

in the beauty that many disdain:

praise it as inconceivable,

as the constancy of its absurd dispositions.

Your journey's route

briefly infinite

traces a drawing only you do not understand,

but do not rise up;

in the raucous vacuum of its center

you will fall

transmutable seed

when beauty and hope

in reverie

pass on. (1-17)

The second half of the poem commands the reader to "not rise up". Why command one to not take action or is a precaution to not lose one's self, a loss of direction that vacuums hope and possibility? In the book *La estructura de la lírica moderna*, Hugo Friedrich explains the importance of the lyrical "vacuum" that began with the modern poetry of Charles Baudelaire: *"La meta del ascenso no solo está muy lejos, sino que está vacía: es un ideal vacuo. Nos hallamos ante un mero polo de tensión,*

hiperbólicamente anhelado, pero jamás alcanzada" (Friedrich 65). Vitale's readers face a similar tension as the poet exalts the unknown or what Baudelaire would claim as *"lo nuevo";* the beauty of *"lo indeterminado".*

The reader is imagined as a "transmutable seed" again perceiving the indefinite of life. In turn, the lyrical dissonance generates an effect. Life and poetry are in motion. Octavio Paz also addresses lyrical energy in stating:

> *Mallarmé compara esta distribución a una partitura . . . Música para el entendimiento y no para la oreja; pero un entendimiento que oye y ve con los sentidos interiores. La Idea no es un objeto de la razón sino una realidad que el poema nos revela en una serie de formas fugaces, es decir, en un orden temporal. La Idea, igual a sí misma siempre, no puede ser contemplada en su totalidad porque el hombre es tiempo, perpetuo movimiento: lo que vemos y oímos son las 'subdivisiones' de la Idea a través del prisma del poema.* (Paz 85)

The poem titled "The Albatross", written by Baudelaire in *Les fleurs du mal*, connects the challenging constraints presented in the poetic voice between the poem "Psalm" to the following "Gratitude". Baudelaire writes of the poetic disconnection that, like the albatross, transcends the reality that attempts to constrain its liberty. Vitale and Baudelaire both conceive the dangers of the world's attempt to devalue the poet's ability to regain strength and perception while in exile:

> Often, to pass the time on board, the crew
> will catch an albatross, one of those big birds

which nonchalantly chaperone a ship
across the bitter fathoms of the sea.

Tied to the deck, this sovereign of space,
as if embarrassed by its clumsiness,
pitiably lets its great white wings
drag at its sides like a pair of unshipped oars.

How weak and awkward, even comical
this traveler but lately so adroit—
one deckhand sticks a pipestem in its beak,
another mocks the cripple that once flew!

The Poet is like this monarch of the clouds
riding the storm above the marksman's range;
exiled on the ground, hooted and jeered,
he cannot walk because of his great wings. (1-16)

Baudelaire reveals that the true state of exile for the poet lies among what Vitale described in the poem "Psalm" as "the raucous vacuum" of one's journey. It traps the poet like the wings of the albatross. Vitale's vacuum suffocates the possibility of openness while Baudelaire's albatross is handicapped within the confinement of a ship. For both poets, transcendence above reality marks a chance of survival through the

abstract. The abstract feeling within these poems relays a purpose of transcending reality and allowing poetry to be open to interpretation; beyond what is evident.

In the book *The American Avant-Garde Tradition*, John Lowney explains the significance of experimentation and also turns to William Carlos Williams to further our understanding of the "abstract":

> When the word, the phrase, the sentence, or even the generic form is situated in a radically new, even obscure, context, its connection to the modern world is not obliterated, but accentuated: 'Good modern work, far from being the fragmentary, neurotic thing its disunderstanders think it, is nothing more than work compelled by those conditions. It is a multiplicity of impulses that by their several flights, crossing at all eccentric angles, *might* enlighten.' Such writing reintegrates art with social praxis by leaving sequences of fragments open to supplementary responses, thus producing a clearer understanding of modern fragmentation. (Lowney 17)

The poets Julio Herrera y Reissig, Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud represent poets that disassociate weakness with ambiguity. Like them, Vitale directs a poetic deconstruction of the world in order to place her reader in an abstract environment where the poet proposes their case. The following poem titled "Gratitude" proves to be one of the most striking of Vitale's poems as she makes her case to her homeland, her readers, her own self. Although the tone of the poem at first may signal feelings of disdain and sarcasm, Vitale concludes her final verses with an empowering stance

through the trials of exile and uncertainty of life. It is in this state the poet finds life sustained and how error can enlighten the self:

> I thank my homeland for its errors,
> those committed, those to come,
> active, blind to its white morning.
> I thank the contrary gale,
> the semi-forgetfulness, the spiny border of sophistry,
> the fallacious denial of a dark gesture.
> Yes, thank you, thank you very much
> for having taken me to wander
> so the hemlock has its effect
> and it no longer hurts when
> *the metaphysical animal of absence**
> bites.
> *Peter Sloterdijk (1-12)

Through the poems analyzed in this chapter, "Gratitude" presents a remarkable message with an offering of appreciation to mistakes, falsehoods, and expulsion. Opposing forces become intertwined in irony as Vitale's "gratitude" intervenes with control and self-understanding amidst misleading circumstances and the lack of truth and certainty. The poet acknowledges life's past and current obstacles with an ever-present deviance to write, to reflect, and to empower the reader. It seems that the poem "Gratitude" positions itself perfectly to be the concluding poem of this chapter because

of its capacity to demonstrate Vitale as a poet with grace, intellect, and hope. The key is to understand that Vitale creates a message of appreciation not directly to her homeland, but instead to poetry itself. Writing is to believe in what is unknown, or the imagined reader. It is in that invisibility that salvation can exist and hope can be procured.

Therefore, Vitale succeeds in transcending the realm of reality through a paradox of placing faith in a state of disorientation. This state of disorientation reminds us of the importance of movement within poetry; a rhythm that sustains the poet as well. Octavio Paz explains: *"Las palabras se conducen como seres caprichosos y autónomos. Siempre dicen 'esto y lo otro' y, al mismo tiempo, 'aquello y lo de más allá'. El pensamiento no se resigna; forzado a usarlas, una y otra vez pretende reducirlas a sus propias leyes; y una y otra vez el lenguaje se rebela y rompe los diques de la sintaxis y del diccionario . . ."* (Paz 49). The idea that a poem cannot truly be finished until one escapes reality is derived from Rimbaud. Friedrich writes of the following concepts introduced by Baudelaire and then continued with Rimbaud:

> *La finalidad del escribir poesías es "llegar a lo desconocido", o, dicho de otro modo: "ver lo invisible, oír lo inaudible" . . . ¿Cuál es el objeto de esta mirada? Las frases con que Rimbaud contesta a esta pregunta se han hecho famosas. 'Porque «yo» es otro. Cuando la hojalata se despierta en forma de trompeta, no hay que echarle la culpa. Yo estoy presente al despertar de mi pensamiento, yo lo contemplo, yo lo escucho. Trazo una línea con el arco y la sinfonía se mueve en la profundidad. Es un error decía: pienso. Habría que decir: me piensan.* (Friedrich 83)

Alongside Rimbaud and Paz, Vitale views the difficulties of producing great poetry as revolving goal. The poet explains that poetry is like a wound. It is a wound that causes pain but at the same time allows healing. Poetry for the exiled poet requires practice, error, and devotion. Vitale comments on what she has learned from the poetry of Juan Ramón Jímenez:

> For me, poetry is nothing more than a wound, a difficult goal to aspire to and to achieve . . . But in any case, although it may be difficult to dedicate one's life to poetry, Juan Ramón taught us nobility through his work. He taught us respect and awareness of what it demands of him. Even his practical advice for writers shouldn't be forgotten: don't take a poem as a finished work from one day to the next; leave it in a drawer for awhile and forget about it in order to see it from the outside. His way of working demands a critical attitude toward poetry, the conviction that one has never reached the end. (García Pinto 231)

Therefore, as indicated in the poem "Gratitude", Vitale displays a critical attitude in knowing that her country's trials are never ending. Most importantly, the poem's appreciation guides her perspective as a poet envisioning that the concluding "end" is in constant change and poetic motion. The wound of the "metaphysical animal of absence" no longer inflicts damage because the poet views the wound as her case, her proposal to transcend a life of positive intellectual activity from within the abstract trials of exile.

Conclusion

The poetic works of Ida Vitale confront readers with the perspective of exile: visualization of time, poetic transcendence, and self-enhancement in the role of intellectual. Poetry questions and responds to the shadows cast in ambiguity. Light transcends through nostalgic visions and the constant presence of tragic regression. In a website that highlights Vitale's works, entitled *"A media voz",* one reads a sentence that undoubtedly describes the poet's goal: *"…Un desventurado estar solo, un venturoso al borde de uno mismo…"* (Vitale, *"A media voz").* With this declaration, Vitale rejects neither the space nor the solidarity that encloses her outside the realm of time. Therefore, the poet proclaims a self-realization in which the individual undergoes a cathartic transformation in order to benefit from the experience of exile and the intellectual development that will indeed produce a constructive perspective, apart from past anguishes and fears that transcend time and the unknown.

In conclusion, the chapter highlights the defining moments of exile through a cyclical concept of time, abstract oppositions, and the transcendence of the intellectual within the poetry of Ida Vitale. For Vitale, exile is indeed a continuing trial but exile is a concept only to be discovered by its beholder: constructive or deconstructive. Her belief in uncertainty signals an abstract, poetic world accepting and embracing challenges and isolation. For Vitale, the hope of change in the future can only be perceived from an active reconstruction of memories and experiences. The characteristic labyrinths encountered throughout many of Vitale's poems place us in her symbolic world of transcendence. In doing so, Vitale seeks to propose that our unknown passage is not meant to isolate our growth and intellect. As readers of her poetry, one cannot deny that

Vitale's state of exile is itself an unknown passage where the poet celebrates the abstract possibilities of love and intellect. It is a path of transcendence, infinite and in progress.

CHAPTER IV

JUAN GELMAN: POETRY: THE MONUMENTAL WOUND

"Only for the sake of those without hope, has hope been given to us"

–Walter Benjamin (Adorno xxvii).

The works of the Argentinian poet Juan Gelman unveil resilience to the darkness of exile through an evolving poetic sense that opens a renewed language to the dead and the survival of the poem and poetic self. As a poet and exile, Gelman emerges alongside José Kozer and Ida Vitale exhibiting a strong will to utilize his intellect and poetry throughout his experience of isolation. The poems presented in this analysis include those written after the poet's exile from Argentina in 1975 that have been published in collected works such as *Unthinkable Tenderness*, *Hacia el sur y otros poemas*, and *Dark Times Filled with Light*.[5] This chapter identifies the central themes of Gelman's poetry by his perseverance to never forget the wounds of his and others past experiences. The poet also builds monuments of self-reflection and asks—what do we learn from exile? A deviant behavior, like that of Kozer and Vitale, emerges in order to reconform his identity in exile apart from a perceived defeat of societal norms. Finally, Gelman's poetry demonstrates a will, or energy to *"gelmanear"* through the continuous tension of questioning, remembering, seeking truth by the role of the intellect and self-reflection.

[5] I have chosen to incorporate poetry collections of Juan Gelman that have been translated to English in order to reach audiences of English speakers and expose a greater number of potential readers to his poetry.

Juan Gelman was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1930. His family's past includes Jewish heritage and the experience of exile. Gelman succeeded in his profession as a journalist with his work for *Crisis*, his direction of the cultural section in *Opinión* and (*jefe de redacción*) of *Noticias*. Gelman left Argentina in 1975 and entered into a life of exile in Europe under conditions that placed the poet and his family in danger. The moment of his exile was followed by the kidnapping and disappearance of his son and daughter-in-law who was pregnant with their first child. In *Guerrillas and Generals*, Paul H. Lewis notes that "a couple of weeks before the 1976 coup, Mario Santucho contacted the artists, writers, and union activists in PRT-ERP and urged them to go into exile, where they would carry out a laudable task of organizing protests against human rights violations and propagandizing the Argentine people's struggle. Similarly, Montonero exiles, such as the poet Juan Gelman, used their literary connections in Europe with people like the novelist Julio Cortázar, to mobilize opinion against the *proceso*" (Lewis 188). Gelman remained in Europe until 1988 and traveled throughout the countries of Spain, Italy, and France. Gelman returned to Buenos Aires in 1988 to pursue work with the newspaper *Página 12*. In 1989, Gelman returned to living outside of his native Argentina in Mexico where he resided until his death in 2014. In an interview, Gelman states the difficulty of returning to his home country:

> *Antes de volver a la Argentina tuve problemas con el gobierno de Alfonsín. Un juez de apellido Pons que había hecho carrera bajo la dictadura militar me dictó proceso y no pude regresar. Finalmente a principios del 88 me permitieron entrar de nuevo. El es el siguiente: A mí*

> *me pasa como a otra gente, que de repente uno se puede encontrar en la calle con los que asesinaron a tus familiares, amigos, etc. Están perdonados indultados bajo la Ley de Obediencia Debida.* (Dimo 111)

Gelman then cites the experience of the Jewish writer Jacobo Timerman when faced with one of his torturers in person. Jacobo Timerman was imprisoned in 1977 by the Argentine regime without an official accusation for his capture and torture. Following his release in 1979, Timerman was forced into exile in Tel Aviv, Israel. After residing in Madrid and New York he returned to Argentina in 1984, where he remained until his death in 1999. Timerman recollected the personal struggle that his identity continually faced along with the question of understanding the hate that condemns his existence as a Jew and the hate that can be projected back towards his enemies. Faced with the fear of solitude, Timerman reverts to the importance of a pragmatic spirit that allows an individual to overcome the humiliation and insults casts upon one's identity. As Gelman turns to the experience of Timerman when faced with the reality of the enemy, Gelman as well must contemplate the possibility of a future living with his former enemy:

> *El torturador lo miró fijo también y dijo: ¿cómo, este judío de mierda sigue vivo? . . . De manera que yo siento un malestar por todo esto. Como poeta, no sé. La poesía es una señora muy caprichosa que viene cuando quiere y una vez que viene si tarda hay que echarla para que no canse demasiado. Yo supongo que todas las circunstancias exteriores moldean de algún modo, dejan su sello pero es muy difícil cuenta en qué consiste*

> *ese sello. Yo me siento muy vinculado a la Argentina, pero me siento muy bien en México.* (Dimo 111)

The historical context of Gelman's forced exile involves the rising tensions and political turmoil that culminated in the Argentinian coup d'etat in 1976. The Peronist victory during the 1973 elections resulted in a democracy that was soon followed by violence between political groups. With the death of Perón in the following year, the government of Isabel Martínez de Perón fell to even more instability and armed forces took control of the country in March of 1976. Historian Gary Wynia writes in his book *Argentina: Illusions and Realities:*

> The violence that Argentines lived with in the 1970s was truly unprecedented. To be sure, political conflict had always been intense and brutality not uncommon, but never before had it bred so much personal insecurity, fear, and madness. Even in the last years of the first Peronist regime, when protests and repression rose, most people left their homes confident that they would return to them at the end of the day. . . . It was quite different in 1975 and 1976, when they feared becoming innocent victims of terrorist bombings or police reprisals. (Wynia 77)

Argentina's Dirty War revealed a time of suppression, kidnapping, as well as political and social violence during the years of 1976 through 1983. In the study "How Traumatized Societies Remember" Antonius Robben explains the methods implemented by the military junta to regain power:

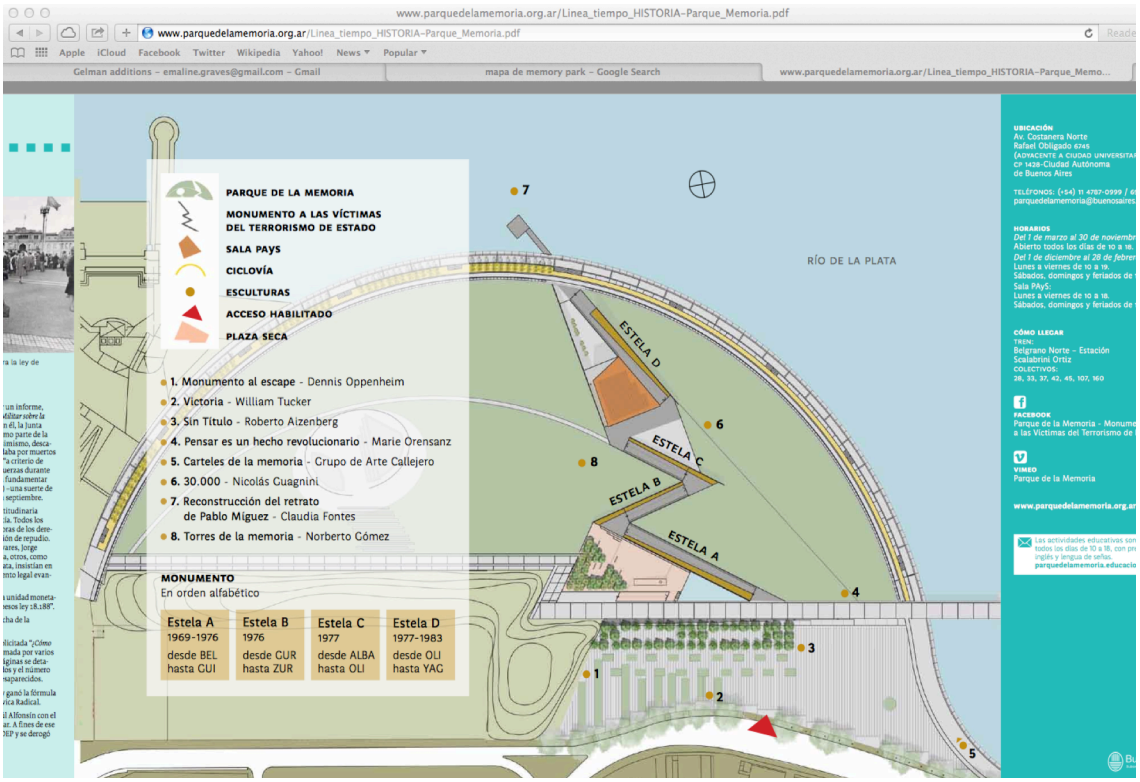
> Disappearance was the preferred method of the Argentine military. . . . Its antirevolutionary "dirty war" resulted in an estimated ten thousand disappeared on the political left . . . Some were released into exile, but most of them were assassinated, and their bodies discarded*. Aside from operational reasons (spreading confusion among guerilla organizations), social reasons (sowing fear in Argentine society), judicial reasons (destroying incriminating evidence), and political reasons (misleading world opinion), the disappearance also served a conscious construction of the national memory about the dirty war. There was not a trace to be left of the defeated, only a memory of the glorious. (Robben 129)

The military efforts to hide and deny any evidence of violently repressing revolutionary acts failed to silence the trauma experienced by the Argentinian people. Not only would Gelman, but others such as marches by the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and the inquiries of the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP), would never let these acts be forgotten without endeavors to question these malicious acts and testify publicly to the tragedies. Robben states that the objectives of the commission centered on "truth and adversity, not reconciliation and forgiveness" (Robben 131). In an effort to continue the objective of truth, the establishment of a Memory Park in Buenos Aires, known as the Monument to the Victims of State Terror in Buenos Aires, commemorates those individual lives taken by the Dirty War. Memory Park is situated next to the shore of the Rio de la Plata and is also close to ESMA (*Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada*), the former Naval Academy and center of torture during the Dirty War.

Among the studies of the Dirty War, the article "The Intertwining—Bodies and Spaces in the Aftermath of Argentina's Dirty War" describes a visit to the Monument to the Victims of State Terror in Buenos Aires by Gigi Otálvaro-Hormillosa. The emotional reaction and physical movement while touring the Monument appeared to mirror my readings of Juan Gelman's poetry. Gelman establishes a feeling of resilience as does the monument. His poetic resilience breaks forth with verses consumed with questions, interrupting streams of conscious, and, most importantly, a transcending movement. It is a movement of thought, emotions, remembrance, and of the dead. The structure of the monument as described by the visitor includes a journey along four walls that zigzag similar to the form of the letter Z, with the final wall following the pattern of sharp

opposite turns. The final structure can be viewed as a jagged wound or scar. (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Map of *Parque de la Memoria*



> There are no architectural voids . . . The voids or absences are in the life of the city and in the flow of the river, and they are marked on those name plaques that still remain empty. The zigzag structure itself, of course, evokes tortured discontinuity. Its discontinuous wall within . . . suggest fragmentation. And given that the monument is cut into the earth rather than rising above it as a building, it yields the additional emphatic sense

> of a wound to the earth or a scar to the body of a nation . . . The loss suffered can never be remedied, the wound will not heal, but the monument provides the space for the kind of reflections necessary to go on living and to feed the democratic public spirit (Huyssen 108-9).

The Monument to the Victims of State Terror, designed by the Baudizzone-Lestard-Varas Studio begins with the first wall where visually it appears taller but as the ground ascends and the height of the wall diminishes. The first monument wall includes engraved name plaques of approximately 9,000 of the disappeared that have been arranged by year of disappearance and/or death between the years 1969 through 1983. Once reaching the end the wall has diminished in its height.

The walls of the Monument and Gelman's poetry are built with a strong remembrance of the many deaths during the Dirty War. Death will play a part in how one perceives our own image and how we carry those memories to the future. The poetry of Gelman aligns with the reflective manner of the monument walls to enlighten readers and observers towards a contemplative state of death, loss, violence, and recovery. The second wall, focusing on the year 1976, includes more names with ages listed but also the engraved word *"embarazada"* noting the name of a pregnant woman. The Monument takes a sharp right with its ground elevating and "its vanishing point cutting into the edge of the third wall partially visible ahead…" (Otálvaro-Hormillosa) The reflective surface behind the plaques is described as "another contemplative space". The third wall contains names from the year 1977 and makes up the top portions of the Z

formed by the beginning three walls. The path towards the end ascends to the fourth and final wall:

> Though the zigzag design that the architects envisioned as a symbol of the "wound inflicted by violence" can best be seen from above, it is felt in the body, at ground level . . . the slope of the ground descends with a gradient as steep as that of the ascension along the first wall. At the top of the incline, the River is in full view. The Monument directs my attention to her. She is its vanishing point. She is the point at which many of the people whose names appear on these walls vanished. On this last wall are names of the disappeared from 1977 to 1983, which begin to diminish. Despite the decrease in the number of names, their impact is just as great. (Otálvaro-Hormillosa)

What connection can be made between touring a monument and the poetic readings of an exiled Argentinean? The poetry of Juan Gelman, as well as the Monument, incorporates memories, questioning, moments with the dead, defeat, solitude, self-reflection, and hope. The creation and movement of the monument coincides with the creation and movement of Gelman's poetry. The beginning of the monument mirrors an individual release into isolation and the impact of violence and death. Like the poetry of Gelman, its jagged path and sharp turns conjure a participation with the sharp reality of pain, stillness, questioning, and acknowledging. The visitor adds:

> The path is oblique, interrupted by voids between each wall, creating spaces for memory in which the body participates. The journey is simultaneously of ascent and descent. When I reached the end of the final wall, my spatial sense shifted once again. Its length extended and intertwined my breath, gaze and movement while its height soared above me, opening out and into its vanishing point—the implicated River toward which I descended. . . . The Monument is a structure that lives—its architecture sensuous. It appeals to the "architectonics of the human body," calling on the body's design to make the most use of its perceptual capacities. The Monument invited me into a journey with open arms and encouraged me to constantly shift my gaze, and my sense of perception, spatiality and corporeality (Otálvaro-Hormillosa).

In my research of this Argentinean poet, I felt it necessary to generate a correlation between these meaningful creations that tie the poetry of Juan Gelman and the The Monument to the Victims of State Terror as wound-like structures. As the final wall of the monument releases its visitors to a different stage, that of the water in the Rio de Plata, so does the final stages of Gelman's poetry lead the reader and his poetic voice to recovery. The water, like many of Gelman's poems, holds a contrasting significance. The river can be viewed as a place of tragedy and loss where many of the victim's bodies of the Dirty War were disposed. It served to silence the dead and remove any trace of conflict and remembrance. The opposing view of the river resides in its ability to resurrect memories of the dead and bring renewal to the survivor's life. The poetry of

Gelman, just as the symbolic nature of water, does not dispose of the memory of the past. As opposed to silencing the truth of loss and isolation, it counteracts bringing nourishment to an evolving life through a memorial of lyrical poetry. Can the monument and Gelman's poetry bring about a true release from the horrors of the past and the constant battle of isolation? No, but Gelman, like the monument, does not fall prey to the enemy of silence. Instead, he visualizes and exercises a continuous movement towards a future in the creativity of words and an active life. Gelman's poetry parallels the importance of a monument as his poems speak for and to the dead. Poetry acknowledges loss and opens perspectives to a life recovering from tragedy and displacement.

A Dialogue with Exile

As a monument stands for remembrance of an event, it allows an individual to come face to face with our questions, grief, memories, and reflections. To visualize Gelman's poetry in a monumental manner, the reader is placed in a confrontational position with his exile. The following selected poems from *Unthinkable Tenderness* demonstrate the necessity and reality of coming to terms with exile, an exile that is his alone. For many writers, living in exile becomes a personal battle. Living with the past equates to living with the dead. Gelman proves how one must control that remorse and direct it into a productive evolvement of the self and his poetic voice. A type of dialogue ensues, beginning with a commentary directed to readers followed by Gelman's intimate memorial to his father comparing their experiences with exile. The poet bonds with his father as he finds that each of them cannot rid their souls from the connection to their

individual homelands. Their exile teaches them to accept a loss of control and that of the unknown.

In the poem titled "XII" the poetic voice connects the inherited experience of uprooting one's life and the manner of communication with that which is left behind. In this first dialogue with exile, Gelman recalls the isolation felt by his father and displays a mature understanding of what entails the strength to leave one's home country. The initial comparison of his father's exodus and his own personal exile divides their experiences between a physical journey by the father, and an emotional journey by Gelman. The division between the two is further illustrated with the father's lack of communication. Whereas, for Gelman, verbalization is life and life serves to create his poetry. However, for both father and son a life in exile is filled with uncertainty:

> My father came to America with one hand in front and the other behind, the better to hold his pants up. I came to Europe with one soul in front and the other behind, the better to hold my pants up. There are differences, however. He came to stay; I came to go back. There are differences, you say? Between the two of us we came and went, and nobody knows where it's going to end.
>
> Papa—your cranium is rotting in the earth where I was born, a symbol of international injustice. That's why you spoke so little; you didn't have to. And the rest—eating, sleeping, suffering, making children—they were the necessary steps, natural, like filling out the forms of human existence.

I will never forget you, in the half-light of the dining room, turned toward the light of your roots. You used to talk to your land.

You never could shake that land from the feet of your soul. Feet full of earth like a great silence, like lead, like light. (1-15)

For Gelman, the experience of his father with that of his own allows him to undertake a mature understanding of his father's devotion to family and the current sacrifice the poet views in his own departure. The core of the poem marks whether differences exist between the poet and his father. Gelman relates this matter with his father rather than his mother who appeared more integrated within their new home in Argentina. The father figure made no intention to travel back to his homeland but the poetic voice claims, personally, there will be a moment of return. The father/son connection appears as well as Gelman places the figures in a half-light. The lack of fullness within their light further resembles the inability to separate themselves entirely from the security of their homeland. Interestingly, Gelman writes of his father's corpse, rotting in a foreign land, as "a symbol of international injustice". This "injustice" is fully comprehended by Gelman as he takes refuge first in Europe after escaping from Argentina without any reassurance of return nor the knowledge of his family's safety. Both the father figure and poetic voice share the experience of an unknown, and perhaps unjust, ending coupled with the challenges of enduring a silence of isolation.

The poem "XXIII"[6] cautions the reader, along with the poet himself, how an

[6] This translated collection of poems from Juan Gelman has been presented in order to introduce his poetry into the literary world of English speakers.

exile can become lost within the confines of their isolation. Isolation cannot only confine the individual physically but also the ability to reestablish a passion and security that emerges within lyrical poetry. However, the environment of exile can lead to a more productive vision that takes place within an environment of plurality. The displacement of the individual outside of their normal realm can support a life engaging in the productivity of multiple visions and possibilities. Along with Gelman, Edward Said notes that an awareness of exile's confinement leads to a positive vision of plurality: "While it seems peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile, there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions. Seeing 'the entire world as a foreign land' makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapuntal*" (Said 186). Gelman utilizes what Said terms as a "plurality of vision" in order to pluralize his own understanding of exile and the world around him. For Gelman, the exile's obsession with the state of exile may further enclose any future chance to evolve and disengage the desire to confront those struggles through writing. Gelman writes:

> He who contemplates exile is absorbed by it. He will be able to talk about exile, but never about himself. If he confines himself to contemplation of it, he'll lose his hunger, he'll lose track of himself, of his roots, he'll forget his mother, he'll become an automaton, always in search of news. Then the worst happens—he stops

desiring.

Desire is necessary to make a dent in contemplation, mix it, change it. That's the only way I know you, recognize you, exile, and you recognize me. (1-9)

The importance of this poem is perceived as Gelman creates a direct discourse with the state of exile by reinforcing this discourse as a necessary act with his own self. The contemplation of his confinement he knows will only lead to a withering of his mind, his memories, and his purpose. Therefore, he must be aware and caution against the loss of desire, which disempowers the writer. The final verse takes a stand with a direct discourse to "exile" and further grounds the poet in his knowledge of what characterizes loss in exile and what characterizes life in desire. The poetic voice warns of how exile can separate the individual not just physically but spiritually and emotionally. This ignorance of one's own doubts, sufferings, and hopes leads to an obliteration of individuality—a dangerous extinction of a writer's desire to live, change, and recognize conformation within an inconsistent world.

Gelman continues a personal discourse with exile as found in the poem titled "XXIV". This poem stands apart from others in that the poetic voice establishes a maze of contrasts equal to that of Gelman's life in exile. The poet states that an individual has the potential to remake him- or herself, but through denial. A denial of what? The poet must deny his own death in exile. The death of exile defeats the poetic confrontation to emotions and social and intellectual changes. The poet must deny his death in exile in order to live poetically:

> Exile is like an everyday otherworld, like a mistake. The persisting in a mistake from which truth can be born. The truth like a corrected error, that is to say, whatever error the truth corrects.
>
> It's that old business of denying reality, whether in Cabilito or Trastevere; whether in Villa Crespo or the Bulmish.
>
> Man is an animal who flies. He travels back and forth over the heavens against the most terrible unreality, slowly and not fearing death. He remakes himself by denying himself. For a short time then he operates between two voids, seeing his face in the mirror, no more than an image projected across past and future, a face charged with the present, that is, with the battle between past and future.
>
> Like an everyday otherworld. (1-12)

The images portrayed result in a continuous conflict of the everyday routine vs. the otherworld mystery, past vs. future, and rebirth through denial. Gelman explains that these paradoxes have always played a persistent part in one's life, stating *"Pasa normalmente en la vida esto de los contrastes, es verdad, no es ejercicio voluntario, siempre fue así. Creo que los contrarios nunca se resuelven en una síntesis, viven tensionados y viven uno del otro"* (Bocannera 192). Our reality, therefore, is an otherworld. The current image of man is in current operation because of a tension, a denial, of images remembered from the past and images of what could be in the future. In order to better understand Gelman's process of denial, the social psychological analysis of Howard Kaplan suggests that the poet's deviance through denial aids in the

defense and growth of his own image and production of poetry. Kaplan would regard Gelman's behavior as deviant and an attempt to devalue the traits of his past. This behavior, though a persistent conflict for Gelman, allows the individual to reinvent values for a reincarnated image of purpose. In the chapter "Deviant Behavior and Self-enhancement" of Kaplan's *Deviant Behavior in Defense of Self,* it is possible for an individual to regard their deviance as a mechanism to appropriate towards values that will enhance their self image and behavior. Kaplan's study states:

> Such behavior might signify to the subjects the presence in themselves of other personally valued traits. Thus, successful aggression might symbolize no only the nullification of the standards by which the subjects have failed but at the same time their own supremacy over those standards. Not only do the subjects destroy the basis for their self-devaluation, but they provide evidence of their own potency that belies their previously felt impotence. (Kaplan, *Deviant Behavior* 176)

Gelman marks a deviant behavior, an aggression, against the strains of exile through the persistence of truth and self-enhancement. Said reinforces this stance of deviance stating "I speak of exile not as a privilege, but as an *alter-native* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity" (Said 184). Said's deviance appears in his refusal to view exile as a privilege. Similar to Gelman, Said notes that a productive focus of the

mind and emotional attitude can arise from the conflict of exile. Gelman's subjective denial of reality coincides with Said's refusal to nurse a wound. Both choose a deviant stance for a subjective life. If viewed as in a constant state of fluidity/battle, exile can result in a reformation through a denial of exile's confinement. The confinement, as seen in the previous poem, can result in a loss of desire, a loss of power and grounding if the indvidual remains entrapped in the past. Gelman identifies his image with that of a messenger, a carrier, linking moments in time with his poetic compositions. The denial of confinement renounces exile's control over the poet and restores a strength of expression free of contraints.

The final poem of this section titled "X" from *De carta abierta* permits the reader to observe a consistent series of questions intimately posed to the loss of the poet's son. The appearance of slashes in the poem are part of the original formatting as published. The divisions created by the slash symbols emerge as if to position the reader within the conflict Gelman lives between the past and future. Kate Jenckes describes the "openness" of Gelman as:

> an obligation to carry the absent other, as if in an open letter sent toward the *Fort-sein* of the world. The poems demonstrate the poet's efforts to come to terms with the loss of his son and his world, a mission that, like an open letter, will never reach a final destination, but which comes from and moves toward something that Gelman calls earthing or worlding (*terrar, mundar*) . . . This worlding can be understood as the time and

> space of survival in Derrida's sense of the word, and as such, Gelman's poetic missive . . . is sent toward the future." (Jenckes 163-4)

Jenckes views the poems of *Carta abierta* as not just a personal openness for the poet towards the mourning of his family but a poetic openness to language and its evolving function in our world. In the poem "X", Gelman's reality is haunted with questions while giving life to a poetic originality that empowers a creation of his own verbs such as *"juaneo"* and *"gelmaneo"*. These verbs construct a world of openness in his exile and the chance for self-enhancement through poetry.

el sufrimiento/¿es derrota o batalla?/
realidad que aplastás/¿sos compañera?
¿tu mucha perfección te salva de algo?/
¿acaso no te duelo/te juaneo/

te gelmaneo/te cabalgo como
loco de vos/potro tuyo que pasa
desabuenándose la desgraciada?/
¿esa que llora al pie de mis muereras?/

¿acaso no te soy para padrearte?/
¿me vas a disculpar que te hije mucho?/
realidad que sufrís como pariendo/
tu sufridero/¿canta para mí?/

¿contra mí?/¿me mostrás lo que yo sea?/

¿me estás alando/ala de mi furor?/

¿te descriaturás como paloma

que busca un ojo ciego para ver? (1-15)

The former dialogue and direct discourse once seen with exile reforms its stance with questions. It is a stance of mourning but as the poet writes he seeks originality and contains his desire of creation by empowering his own verbs—*juaneo* and *gelmaneo*. Similar to the encounter with the beginning walls of the Memorial Park in Buenos Aires, Gelman situates the poetic voice in a state of questioning and remembrance. It not only questions intimately the individual who was taken but also exercises, like the mirroring effect of the memorial wall, a sense of self-reflection. Through the process of questioning Gelman engages in a poetic denial of reality and allows for the opportunity of creation and originality.

Jenckes describes the punctuation marks and verb constructions as a way to "introduce elements of strangeness into the familiar space of language, requiring us to question the reliability of linguistic convention, and stressing that meaning is not something to be taken for granted . . . they can be said to extend a hermeneutic hospitality, an openness to the remains of meaning, accesible through what Derrida calls 'the hiatus of a wound whose lips will never close, will never draw together'" (Jenckes 163).

In the introduction of the play *The Trial of God*, by Elie Wiesel, Marion Wiesel regards the act of questioning as a right, a right to believe, mourn, and reestablish one's self:

> So what shall we do? Rather than passivity, a dedicated aggressiveness is demanded. We are invited by another part of the Jewish tradition not to bury our concerns but to hold them up, to confront God with them, sometimes in anger. This is the manner of Jeremiah, who challenges God: 'Why do the wicked prosper, and the treacherous all live at ease?' (Jer.12:1)…We are permitted to question God, to challenge God, to demand an accounting from God. And this, rather than diminishing God is truly to take God seriously. As Wiesel has frequently remarked, 'I do not have any answers, but I have some very good questions.' (Wiesel xvi)

The Power of Defeat

In the poems of Juan Gelman, the dialogue with exile cannot exist without a discourse with the dead. Defeat enters the realm of remembrances of fallen compatriots, tortured friends, and disappearances of family members. The above quote from Wiesel and the previous poem of Gelman cannot escape the feeling of defeat. Questions multiply without answers and they are alone, isolated in a one sided conversation. Gelman redirects the sense of defeat as a discourse with the dead.

He challenges this defeat with this discourse that retains their memory, energy, and life of creation. The poems of Gelman selected in this section display a sort of battleground in which tensions of an individual's frailty in exile play in opposition to the power of reconciliation and triumph. In the poem "XXVI" from *Bajo la lluvia ajena*

Gelman situates the exile in opposing positions of solitude and the multiplicity of personas that make up one's memories, one's being:

> *En realidad, lo que me duele es la derrota.*
> *Los exiliados son inquilinos de la soledad.*
> *Pueden corregir su memoria, traicionar, des-*
> *creer, conciliar, morir, triunfar. En este último*
> *caso, se miraron la cara como si fuese suya: esta-*
> *ba llena de traidores, descreídos, conciliadores,*
> *muertos, y también de compañeros que murie-*
> *ron con fe y arden bajo la noche y repiten sus*
> *nombres y no dejan dormir.*
> *Nadie te deja dormir para que veas las distan*
> *cias.*
> *Crujís de huesos, vos.*
> *Así sea.* (1-13)

Viewing the exiled individual as a "tenant" of solitude restricts *"la soledad"* from owning, or even defining, the individual. Life, as the exile sees his or her face, encompasses a multitude of memories, deceit, triumphs, and deaths. The noise of death does not allow the exile to settle quietly but reinforces the errors of defeat. Gelman reinforces a power against defeat as he is reminded to seek truth and never lie to himself in order to survive the reality of his isolation with the dead.

In an interview, Gelman is questioned about a verse from the poem *"Bajo la lluvia ajena"* that reads *"vivir en otra tierras sin mentir, sin mentirme",* and Gelman responds, *"Traté de hacerlo en los países en que viví y en el que vivo. El desarraigo tiene una característica muy especial: puede dejar venenos en la lengua. En el último poema del libro que usted cita, se dice que la derrota duele. Con los 30.000 desaparecidos en la Argentina, despareció además un proyecto de cambio y de justicia social. También eso duele. Y es imprescindible reconocer esta verdad, reconocer los errores propios y ajenos, no mentir, no mentirla"* (Solanes 122). The reality of Gelman's isolation emphasizes the importance of never lying to one's self. The extended time in exile may lead to a misconstrued perception of their personal loss and the loss of their country. Truth can be a deadly poison but his estrangement can be even more harmful.

For Gelman, exile can be poinsonous as he stated *"puede dejar venenos en la lengua",* paralyzing his ability to qualify what is honest in his life and highlighting the reconstructive nature of language through poetry. The difficulty of truth increases within the confinement of exile as Gelman writes in the poem "Under Foreign Rain":

> I. It is difficult to reconstruct what has happened; the truth of memory struggles against the memory of truth. Years have passed; the dead and the hatreds pile up; exile is a cow that can give poisoned milk; some at least, it seems, can live on it . . .
>
> The need to self-destruct and the need to survive fight with each other like brothers gone crazy. We keep the clothes in the closet, but

> we have not unpacked the suitcases of the soul. Time passes and the way we deny exile is to deny the country we're in, deny its people, its language, to reject them as if they were concrete witnesses of mutilation: our land is far away, what do these foreigners know of its voices, its birds, its duels, its thunderstorms. (1-4, 10-16)

Gelman points his readers to the reality of "foreignness" and the perspective of the outsider attempting to gain an understanding the truth of exile. The conflicting battle begins anew each day. Gelman's "suitcase of the soul" will never fully accept residence in a foreign country. His residency now must find comfort in the poems that bring life from his native Argentina. This foreign world is superficial and uninviting. Gelman deviates from the foreign land due to its superficial façade in order to avoid a conceited infatuation with images. Therefore, the poem develops an aggression to reject its standards. The key to this first section is that the poetic voice stays faithful to the idea of denying exile the power to give him a fixed identity within defeat. Edward Said writes of this process of identification, stating:

> To see a poet in exile—as opposed to Reading the poetry of exile—is to see exile's antinomies embodied and endured with a unique intensity . . . These and so many other exiled poets and writers lend dignity to a condition legislated to deny dignity—to deny an identity to people. From them, it is apparent that, to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself. (Said 174-175)

Gelman continues the second section of *Under Foreign Rain* with a determination to uncover more than defeat within exile. There is something to gain from his experience as an exile. Knowledge taken from exile is an individualized process that will never fully be conceived as Gelman identifies its existence in a metaphysical image full of coils, deepness, and mystery. The poet concedes to the mystery with an approach of love. This love, a foreign concept in the foreign land, carries the blood of the past and remains grounded because it is a love of sacrifice and the cost of freedom. This love will defy his exile because it serves as a desire in the poetic creation. For Gelman, it is a poetic love with the freedom to change how one understands to learn and live for the plurality of chance and hope:

> II What can we learn from exile is not given to us; it is given to itself, and deep in thought, turned inward, coiled around itself, dug in to itself, not us. Can we learn from it? Yes, we can, but what? . . .
>
> But we have time, time to not go crazy, to not be changed from who we are. To reveal the terrain of madness to the napes of those necks that crazily fail to see us; they stare eternally in mirrors, chasing shadows, back to back with each other . . .
>
> We drag our feet in rivers of dried blood, in souls stuck to the earth with love, we want no other worlds but freedom and we don't *word that word about, knowing since many deaths ago it can be spoken in love but not about love, clearly, but not about clarity, freely, but not about freedom. (1-3, 12-16, 21-25)

It is apparent in the second half of the poem that the poetic voice transforms its aggression to a stance of intellect and empowerment. The knowledge gained from exile exists in a constant state of mystery never to be entirely understood or obtained by an individual. The complex coils and depths that Gelman describes remind the reader that it is an evolving state and therefore never to be possessed by an individual. Gelman refocuses on the stability of time and warns of losing one's identity in mirrors and shadows knowing that terms like "clarity" and "freedom" are concepts never to be fully understood. This reformed visualization of defeat and identity strike the reader in another poem titled "Somewhere Else" from *Southward*. Gelman begins a discourse with his heart and directs his defeat, his dead, and his heart in a new direction. Through the poem readers must observe that Gelman does not leave defeat, death, or sorrow behind to be forgotten. It remains with him and carries him to a different path. The dead are portrayed as innocent, helpless animals. The sadness and suffering of these "animals" is transformed through the poet's actions and the lyrical verse becomes active. Sadness and suffering are not to be left behind because they lead to action—thinking, living, and writing:

> did you hear me / heart? / we're taking
>
> defeat someplace else /
>
> we're taking this animal elsewhere /
>
> our dead / somewhere else /
>
> let them make no noise / quiet as they can be / not

even the silence of their bones should be heard /

their bones, little blue-eyed animals /

who sit like good children at the table /

who touch pain without meaning to /

saying not a word about their bullet wounds /

with a little gold star and a moon in their mouths /

appearing in the mouths of those they loved /

they pass out news of their dreams /

wipe their tears with a hanky, as if sweeping away suffering /

not wanting it to get wet with tears /

so that suffering might explode and burn and find a place to sit down
and start thinking again /

we're going / heart / someplace else /

it's a shame you can't cut off your feet from sadness /

though it's sadness which kisses the hand that grabbed the rifle and
triumphed /

and has a heart and keeps in its heart a woman and a man passing
through the southern sky like tigers / … (1-23)

From this perspective, Gelman chooses a different path, which carries sorrow and the dead so that it may aid him to utilize his intellect, his poetry, to find peace apart from the confinement of exile's defeat. Edward Said recalls the studies of Adorno in moments of defeat, stating:

> Consciousness of the possibility of resistance can reside only in the individual will that is fortified by the intellectual rigor and an unabated conviction in the need to begin again, with no guarantees except, as Adorno says, the confidence of even the loneliest and most impotent thought that "what has been cogently thought must be thought in some other place and by other people." In this way thinking might perhaps acquire and express the momentum of the general, thereby blunting the anguish and despondency of the lost cause, which its enemies have tried to induce. (Said 553)

Exile cannot become a state of selfish conceit. Gelman previously stated that what is learned "is given to itself" and not to the individual. There are no guarantees and yet Adorno finds that it is possible. The guarantee is that intellect will surpass the enemy's values and find relevance in a restructured path of hope and expression.
A presence of the dead for Gelman does not signify an end to their battle for social justice. Instead of relinquishing anguish from the dead, the poetic voice is filled with their dreams. Their suffering transfers a burning energy that fuels a sense of hope and revitalizes the act of the intellect, not of one that gives in to defeat. Gelman best describes the process as follows *". . . lo real es que uno escribe movido por un impulso*

interior que lo exterior puede incitar, promover, todo depende. La escritura cae dentro de este orden de cosas. Uno vive el mundo y lo esencial dentro de la escritura no es el tema, sino el mensaje y sobre todo la escritura como tal" (Dimo 113).

The final poem of this section, titled "Facts", combines the notion of defeat and the victory of intellect. From the outside, the world may observe an individual fighting in a lost cause but, from within, the poet's self-reflection establishes a power in the process of a poetic creation. Within the verses a glow of autumn signifies a mature stance against a stone, otherwise seen as the constricted state of Argentina's class struggle. Gelman also sets up the conflicting state of physical labor of the Argentine people versus the intellectual labor of himself and comrades. The poet maintains that the creation and work of a verse is the creation and work of a weapon:

> while the current dictator or bureaucrat was speaking
> in defense of the regime's legally established disorder
> he took a line or verse born of the cross
> between a stone and a bright glow in autumn
>
> outside the class struggle raged on / brutal
> capitalism / back-breaking work / stupidity /
> repression / death / police sirens splitting
> the night / he took the line of poetry and
>
> deftly opened it in half packing
> more beauty into one part and then more

into the other / he closed up the line / put
his finger on its first word / squeezed

it aimed at the dictator or bureaucrat
the line shot out / the speech went on / the
class struggle went on / brutal
capitalism / back-breaking work / stupidity / repression / death /
police sirens splitting the night. (1-17)

Through the beginning stanzas of the poem Gelman places his readers amidst the tension of conflicting worlds. The work of an unidentified writer appears between a symbolic stone of an unchanging, course resistance and a glow of autumn that symbolizes change, maturity and intellect. The enormity of the outside environment powers over the verses of beauty. Gelman knows that the verses will not defeat the struggle or dictatorships but, more importantly, beauty has the capacity to exist and be produced. Its production arises because the conflict never fades away:

this explains why so far no line of poetry has overthrown
any dictator or bureaucrat not even
a small dictator or bureaucrat / and also explains
how a verse can be born from the cross between a stone and a bright
glow in autumn or

a cross between the rain and a ship and also from
other crossings no one would know how to predict / in other words

births / marriages / the

shots fired by neverending beauty. (18-26)

Gelman's message does not negate the incapacity of defeating past and current social/political injustices through the use of poetry. However, his message departs from how a verse is born, or how one's intellect can thrive within such struggles. Adorno states in his study *Can One Live after Auschwitz*? "One must come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal these mechanisms to them, and strive, by awakening a general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again . . . One must labor against this lack of reflection, must dissuade people from striking outward without reflecting upon themselves" (Adorno, *Can One Live* 21). Given Adorno's premise, it is seen with Gelman's poetry that the role of the poet or intellect may not break a dictatorship but its creation can sting and send a message to others. Gelman's message is fired by verses of beauty and the hope that others may generate a labor that is productive, a labor of self-reflection that results in an awakening of intellect. Finally, the aspect of "autumn" begins to appear, signaling a sense of change as well as the maturity of Gelman's poetic creation, an element further explored in the following section.

Seeking Stability on Unstable Ground

The works of Juan Gelman have presented a poet continually pursuing a dialogue with exile and a deviant behavior that resists being overcome by the defeat of isolation. The chapter's outline has also reflected a similar movement to that of traveling through

the Monument to the Victims of State Terror where the concluding segment of this study correlates to the monument's final passage. The jagged lines of the walls, like the marked disjunctions of Gelman's verses, signal a wound. The physical wound of the monument releases visitors from sharp, jagged turns to a vision of openness towards the Río de la Plata. Some may consider this conclusion as a release from the wounds of memory, pain, and questioning as it turns individuals towards the simplicity of nature. However, the monument, like the poetry of Gelman, only takes one to the next step of maturing our senses to the future that lies before us and its continual tie to the past. The river cannot conceal the deathly bodies it has seen, but it continues to flow, the dead buried, and its current in a continuous movement.

Gelman's poetry would not find purpose and regenerate without the wounds of death and defeat. His poetic works and the monument lack a definitive recovery from its wound because they serve to engage others in the fluidity of life where the past must be acknowledged as well as the unknown future. In the article "How Traumatized Societies Remember: The Aftermath of Argentina's Dirty War" Antonius Robben describes the importance of remembrance along with the difficulty of the unknown:

> Many Argentines involved in memory construction reiterate that they are motivated by the determination that Argentine society should not forget the horrors of the dirty war. Forgetting the past would be the final victory of the perpetrators, after having already erased the remains of many disappeared from Argentine society. The greater tragedy is that perpetrators always score a victory because the unknowable is a

> foundational element of any trauma, be it psychic or social. Trauma and the unknowable emerge together. Hence, memory construction becomes an even more transcendent means to prevent forgetting, namely by steadily nibbling away at those voids with testimonies, narratives, and artistic expressions, and by piecing separate memory strands into interpretational and analytical frameworks. (Robben 152-3)

This perspective of memory construction, as presented by Robben, allows one to grasp the ability of Gelman, other writers, artists, and families that live in a state of transcendence that produces a reconstruction of their experiences through various outlets. The poems that follow reflect how Gelman's poetry testifies to the continual regeneration of memory and hope in exile. Transcendence emerges as the poet seeks stability on an unstable ground. Gelman's perception of life in exile acknowledges the uncertainty of interpretations from past memories and welcomes the metamorphosis of the self through the poetic language within ambiguity.

The poem titled "V" from *Bajo la lluvia ajena* allows the reader to perceive Gelman's initiative to remember and continually pursue justice. This guides his concept of activity in exile and serves as the transcendence of his own self-enhancement. Exile does not diminish the ability to remember and hope nor does it immobilize the love and pain felt towards one's country. While Gelman's enemies may perceive his exile as a mechanism that will silence and weaken his poetry, his deviant stance towards those expectations make the act of remembering a force to move forward. In the article "What Do We Say When We Say 'Juan Gelman'?", Ben Bollig writes that ". . . poetry engages

in a direct, casual relationship with world conditions, so hunger leads to skinny poetry. Poetry thus reflects its circumstances, and must express the real-world conditions around it . . . while the poet is one who feels the 'puro dolor' that exists in the world, and is sensitive to the suffering of fellowman, with pain seen as something held in common between all human beings . . . An unmediated triangular relationship thus exists between poet, poem, and world" (Bollig 125-6). Errors transcend and pain strengthens into love and a passion to reform. It is a passion to reform life through the transcendence of writing:

de los deberes del exilio

no olvidar el exilio/

combatir a la lengua que combate al exilio!

no olvidar el exilio/ o sea la tierra/

o sea la patria o lechita o pañuelo

donde vibrábamos/ donde niñábamos

no olvidar las razones del exilio/

la dictadura militar/ los errores

que cometimos por vos/ contra vos/

tierra de la que somos y nos eras/

a nuestros pies/ como alba tendida/

y vos/ corazoncito que mirás

cualquier mañana como olvido/

no te olvides de olvidar el olvido. (1-14)

The poem interlocks the memories of the home country with the foreign insecurity of exile. Gelman does not disconnect from the love of his country nor does he forgive the atrocities of his country that led to his exile. In the final verses of the poem, the poetic voice urges his heart to relinquish each day as a means to forget. Time is not lost and remains to allow memories and sensations of the past to redirect a connection towards a stronger life of exile. Each day will only serve to reconstruct our memories and prevent an immobilization of love and intellect. Gelman's stance also appears in the poem "Note XXV" that addresses his deceased friends:

> beloved friends / friends dead
> in combat or by betrayal or torture /
> I do not forget you though I love a woman /
> I do not forget you because I love / as
>
> you yourselves once loved / remember? /
> how you walked in beauty through the air / how you fought? /
> and the warmth of a woman loomed up in in your face /
> remember? I remember
>
> having seen in you a woman shining
> in the midst of painful combat /
> then you shone immortal
> against pain / against death / (1-12)

The poetic voice, which has previously displayed a physical isolation from his home country, now expresses the emotional separation from his loved ones. However, Gelman does not equate their loss with the absence of love and life. Edward Said relates to this process as he turns towards the studies of Theodor Adorno in *Minima Moralia*: "He argued that everything that one says or thinks, as well as every object one possesses, is ultimately a mere commodity. Language is jargon, objects are for sale. To refuse this state of affairs is the exile's intellectual mission" (Said 184). As with Gelman, the absolute loss of his family and comrades will be denied, as Said states, to maintain Gelman's mission as a father, remembering his son's death, and as a writer, surviving in his verses. The poet's verses regenerate their memory and reestablish a sense of survival. The intellect's objective gathers strength in productive thinking. Personal loss cannot equate with the loss of the intellect's objective. His poetry and recollections immortalize memories and contribute to his self-worth as a survivor.

Gelman further illustrates his transcendence in the poem "Things They Don't Know" where the poet refuses to let tragedy destruct passion and privacy. Conflicting worlds meet as a dark external force seeks to impose upon an internal creation of love. The poet is aware of the darkness through the changing environments. Amidst the violence and uncertainty, the light of the sun and the connection of love are impenetrable. The poetic voice reminds us that our perspective can only be determined through emotions that are open to beauty and change amidst the outer forces of chaos. For Gelman, life, like the opposing elements of the sun and night, continues to challenge the confrontations of love and violence:

dark times / filled with light / the sun

spreads sunlight over the city split

by sudden sirens / the police hunt goes on / night falls and we'll

make love under this roof / our eighth

in one month / they know almost everything about / except

this plaster ceiling we make love

under / and they also know nothing about

the rundown pine furniture under the last ceiling / or

about the window the night pounded on while you shone like the

sun / or

about the beds or the floor where

we made love this month / with faces around us like the sun

spreading sunlight over the city. (1-13)

The external force seeks to weaken its victim, surrounding it and chasing it continuously. Sunlight, the opposing force of the poet, is not only encountered over the city but also from within the love untouched by darkness and interrogation. The following words of Said further elaborate how many exiles reconstruct their surrounding world and adapt a re-conformed notion of home: "The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" (Said 185).

Gelman does not allow the violence and injustices around him to entrap the love that is still manageable. It is in this intellect that "they", or his enemies, remain unaware and further encourage the poet to grow in a light of poetic creativity.

In the three poems "If Gently", "Quiet at Last", and "Walking Now", from *Dark Times Filled With Light*, Gelman arrives at an autumn-like maturity in his poetic voice. Elements such as the confrontation of survivor's guilt, questions arise to the death of comrades, and recognition of the poet's true enemy resounds in the sequence of these three poems. "If Gently" begins the sequence with his contemplation of the dead and the silence of their absence. The first two stanzas question the transition of worlds between the dead and the living. Gelman questions if there is a possibility of a gentle transition amidst these worlds. The discourse of the dead is silent. The border between the opposing worlds is misconstrued. Who is left with the ability to converse, survive, or even dream?

> if waves from someone who threw himself into the sea
> came to mind gently / what about our brothers who were
> in-earthed? / do leaves sprout from their fingers? /
> saplings / autumns soundlessly losing their leaves? / silently
>
> our brothers talk about the time when
> they were two three inches away from death / they smile
> remembering / even now feeling their relief
> as if they hadn't died / …

but now they're talking about when

things worked out / nobody killed / nobody got killed / they

outwitted the enemy making up for some of the general

humiliation /

with brave actions / with dreams / and all this time

their companions lying there / wordless /

flesh falling from their bones on a january night /

quiet at last / so terribly alone / without kisses. (1-8, 16-23)

The poetic voice plays with the notion of silence and leaves the reader wondering whether death can completely silence the actions and memories of those lost. Gelman relates that his comrades converse as if not taken by death, while in the final verse they are "quiet at last" and "alone". This concept of silence integrates the role Gelman views as the work of the poet or intellect. As a writer, he carries the ability to uplift the voice of his comrades through a lyrical verse. Silence is interrupted by the poetic creation of Gelman and will ultimately become his true enemy. Gelman himself stated the importance *"de no olvidar"*. Silence equates the act of forgetting. The last verse leads to the beginning of the second poem "Quiet at Last". A sense of quiet from the dead contrasts with a growing agitation. These contrasts interestingly conform to the four elements of matter presented by Gelman within the poem: earth, water, air, and fire.

quiet at last / so terribly alone / without kisses / my comrades

think *me* night after night / they toss and turn

unable to sleep / restless under sheets

of earth or water where they're going away /

gone / eaten away by the truth / i toss and turn /
around this shame like a wing / fly
little bird / fly / my son's face in the middle
of my woman or loneliness / pull away /

i'm burning with the fire you burn
lowered / comrades / or neighborhoods of fire
my soul passed through like a voice
walking now with the world's feet. (1-12)

The dead are carried by the elements of earth and water. The flight of shame felt by the poet introduces the element of air but is cycled into the element of fire, lighting the dreams of himself and his comrades. The poem in this sequence connects the turmoil felt between the living poetic voice and the poet's deceased comrades. The aspect of survival's guilt is identified with a recognition of shame as the poet is left with uneasiness and images of his deceased son that evoke loneliness. However, the last stanza brings forth life and a separation from the dead. Because the poet burns with the same dreams of his comrades, he is given perseverance. His soul transcends an airy flight to find itself cycled back again to a stable, grounded presence on earth. The act of walking with the world, not dwelling isolated among the dead, leads the reader into the final poem "Walking Now":

walking now with the world's feet / i'd ask

where do our comrades' rivers of passion

run / what seas do they burn / poor things they've simply died /

time climbed onto their shoulders to go on / they

carried winds / rages / history / they were open

to love's greatest adventure / never forgetting love itself

or self-respect / pride or dignity / if need be /

they weren't gods only men and women who

had to eat / empty their bladders / live /

procreate in the course of the physical as well as the other night /

they weren't by any means perfect / most knew nothing

about the rules of dialectic materialism / hadn't read

das kapital / their tongues tripped on economics /

but light fell from their sweating / red / wrinkled foreheads /

thinking

of how to defeat the enemy / or help / in any case /

the air around them / the grace

that had no fear of death / unique grace / environs

of awareness of feeling / of suffering / not only one's own

but the pain of many / that rare bird singing

in the middle of the soul / wings beating

in the dark / strong / bringing exteriors

inside / or bloods like incandescences /

marvels of the other like an extension of one's soul /

running toward the sea / with light / with other souls. (1-25)

Gelman sees a division between his grounded presence and the passing of his comrades. Time has marked an end to their battles. Above all the memories the poet is best guided by their light—a light generated from thinking. For Gelman, this act of thought is not based upon academic or theoretical levels. The light simply glows from a self-awareness of struggle and discernment of injustices placed on others. Gelman concludes the sequencing of these three poems with the simple characteristics of our humanity. Time will pass on and move beyond the historical acts of fighting for freedom and justice. However, Gelman remains faithful to retaining a connection between the bodies and acts of the past with the souls of the living. His comrades represent everyday needs shared by all but they were unmatched because of their grace against death, a motive for change, and a selflessness that extended towards others. The poetic voice concludes that their light of life like the constant movement of the sea will always bear a passage of movement between the past and future, the living as well as the dead.

Gelman brings his readers to the dead and the dead find a voice through his verses. His motive in exile transcends through the dreams of the dead that are resuscitated in the lyrical creation of his poetry. While in exile, the poet regards the exterior environment as unstable, unforgiving, and lacking compassion. He enables his

growth finding control through a deviant stance before his enemy's perceived barriers of exile. Gelman's control surfaces with terms such as *"te juaneo"* or *"te gelmaneo"* that strengthen his self-worth and his survival between opposing forces.

According to Edward Said, Adorno regarded the act of the creation "by the belief that the only home truly available now, though fragile and vulnerable, is in writing . . ." (Said 184). Silence between the world of the living and the dead remains to be questioned but never entirely lost. Gelman disorients the reader with the silent noise of the dead and its continual unrest. He denies his exile as an initiative to obstruct his intellect and silence his pain, memories, and love.

Silence in Gelman's exile proves to be his most dangerous enemy. It is in silence where exile can corner its victim and immobilize the act of thinking and loving. His poems question the actions of his enemies and mourn the loss of beloved family and friends, while awakening a sense of self-worth that develops through his poetic works. Ultimately, the true enemy that threatens with silence and barriers is found in the death of poetry itself.

The sections of this chapter have outlined Gelman's poetic dialogue with exile, the defeat of the poet, and finally the stability poetry retains for the exiled writer. A final poem titled "Poetry Once More" undoubtedly defines Gelman's relation with poetry as an intimate obsession—a love that pains him and yet serves to ignite his self-worth. His poetic voice invites his reader to observe this intimate relationship as if the poet and poetry are separate entities but joined together by experience and compassion. Poetry

embodies a humanistic level as the poetic voice feels its touch. The power, or rather the value of his verses, is immeasurable when weighed against worldly, materialistic riches:

I don't know why you return to this misery /
the riches of all creation are poorer than you /
you come with your body / or words /
or hands / or caresses that touch the ultimate pain /

why do you show me your breasts? / you think
I don't know that beneath forms / figures / images / thrones
or loveliest light /
you are crucified? / you give your lifeblood? /
you follow me through the streets as if I were the japanese one / (1-9)

Gelman addresses poetry and its capacity to withdraw his personal anguish that in turn is, ultimately, a sacrifice for the poet and his verses. It is a sacrifice that exposes the poet's intimate emotions, weaknesses, and loves to the world. Poetry exposes a certain vulnerability of the writer. Love and pain are crucified and set before a public display and criticism. He concludes with the concept that without this ability of poetic creation, the poet is only another individual, powerless and unknowing. For Gelman, poetry is an extension of man who as a poet can transcend environments of exile, painful memories, and seek self-worth in each day. It is an action the poet himself would denote as the will to *"gelmanear":*

you deflowered God with your humbleness /

and you don't care about His weaknesses /

you don't make me say words I don't mean /

just to keep them in your appreciative little soul /

you make your way between rage and its sadness /

between words and what words cannot say /

the word that is silent so that you can be born /

naked as you are /

you please me because you go out into the street /

you are not afraid of slums /

you walk through the mud of the soul /

and everywhere you find your own beauty / (18-29)

While in exile, Gelman wrote that he was given time but does that time heal all wounds? In the poem "Poetry Once More" the nature of a poet and their verses remain to uncover pain while slowly beginning a process of healing. Poetry is the wound and can never be completely healed. The pain changes as life changes and confronts new struggles and joys. In return, the poet experiences a redirection and language is reconstructed. What we learn from the wound changes. Wounds are never completely healed and appear repeatedly as life can never truly dismiss its past. Gelman's poetic language progressed with an effective element of personal realization and self-worth.

Gelman never ceases to question the atrocities leading up to his exile. His poems, like his soul, labor through battles in continual conflict. His wounds, like his poetry, recount a life of recovery in exile. Many poets ask questions but a great poet asks important questions. These are the questions that leave us asking ourselves about our importance. It is more than posing a question to be directed towards others and assume response only by others. Gelman makes us take responsibility individually. He envisions self-worth from both sides. In the beginning of his exile, Gelman's discourse connects with the isolation felt by his own father. Neither one can entirely break free from their homeland.

His defiance to commiting his life to a foreign land in exile remains the key factor for Gelman. This deviance allows Gelman to recreate a personal self-worth and intellectual focus by reestablishing values and literary expression that do not define his life in exile. This stance continues as Gelman acknowledges the defeat exile places before him. The poet concedes to the mystery and conflicting nature of exile while evolving defeat, the dead, and his heart in a new direction. This direction is communicated through Gelman's verses of poetry. The exile of Juan Gelman remained a constant battle of instability as the poet fought the weakening forces of his isolation while never doubting the importance of remembering his fallen comrades, loving son, and his homeland. The verses of his poetry transcend the silent discourse with the dead and the injustices of the Argentine people. Survival of the poem deviates from exile's instability and endangerment to forget where one originated and why. The poems of

Gelman have proven to withstand the conflicts of his exile and, as multiple wounds, they recount a poet and a man who envisioned light in the darkest of times.

CHAPTER V

EXILE IN THE 21st CENTURY

"To a reader. Do not trust the poem—

The daughter of absence

It is neither intuition nor is it

Thought

But rather the sense of the abyss…"

–Mahmoud Darwish *State of Siege*

"I preferred exile – the closest thing to happiness…I now live in the U.S., away from Mexico, and write in English. Who am I? Perhaps only a question mark, a doubt, an uncertainty. That's why I love New York: the city of exile."

–Ilan Stavans *The Writer in Exile*

The poets José Kozer, Ida Vitale, and Juan Gelman represent a generation of 20th century exiled writers that has succeeded professionally and evolved intellectually and emotionally amidst the challenges of establishing a life in a different country and language and maintaining a rigorous effort to support an intellectual power in their displacement. As the world progresses in the 21st century, these poets and other exiled writers have faced a modernization of communicating that has opened previous limitations. Today, exile and the writer are not necessarily encapsulated by the traditional restrictions of communication. Individuals can cross borders with the use of email, video chats, and social media, depending on the conditions of their exile.

However, does the globalization and modern progress of communication ease the difficulty of exile?[7] Of course the search for an answer will depend on the individual circumstances of exile but the challenges of languages, opportunities of employment, cultural adaptation, the creative exercise of writing, and renewing the worth of a poetic verse depend on a valued sense of self and a perceived progression of self worth in an evolving world.

Exile is a state that results from a forced action. This force mobilizes even those whose exile is self-inflicted. The choice results from a threat of one's existence in their homeland. The modernization of our communicative system holds a potential to further deepen our isolation from the reality of physical communications and relations that create and share values through an active involvement in a particular social group. For an exiled writer, it threatens to maximize the ambiguity of an already ambiguous state. The modern technology of the 21st century can also isolate our opportunity of experience and reduce the need to face the pressing challenges within exile. These challenges include language barriers, employment, cultural discrimination, redefining one's self-worth, a change in literary audiences.

From the writings of José Martí to José Donoso to Ida Vitale, readers experience not one perspective of exile but a kaleidoscope of perspectives that intertwine the shadows and light of reforming a life in exile. As readers we must be conscience of how these authors write about one's homeland, the effect on their national identity, the possibility of exile as rebirth and, for others, death, and the opportunities and

[7] Camnitzer, Luis. *On art, artists, Latin America, and other utopías*. Weiss, Rachel, ed. Austin: U of Texas P, 2009

constrainsts that come with exile. In 2007, Luis Roniger and James N. Green published an issue in *Latin American Perspectives* titled "Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America" that urges a continuation of research in exile. For Roniger and Green, this research must include: (a) the effects of exile on the second generation; those returning and remaining in exile, (b) the influence of exiles within politics, social issues, etc., (c) understanding how, or even if, exiles are received in their home country upon return, (d) the changes in ideology after exposure to other perspectives of identity, gender, etc., (e) and finally, the need for recorded testimonies from individual exiles (Green and Roniger 106-108). Among these issues, it appears that the basis of investigation in the works of exiled writers stands within the relation between the writer and language. Language binds the exiled individual to a constant challenge to express their identity, truth, reality, and dreams.

For many writers, exile challenges above all things the individual's relationship with their language. Giorgio Agamben explains that language is a reflection of maturity of knowledge and desire writing "Here man is not always already in the place of language, but he must come into it; he can only do this through *appetitus*, some amorous desire, from which the word can be born if it is unites with knowledge. The experience of the event of language is, thus, above all an amorous experience. And the word itself is *cum amore notitia*, a union of knowledge and love . . ." (Agamben 68). It is in their language where residence cannot be disputed and welcomes survival through change and adaptation. The poet Mahmoud Darwish (1942-2008), also considered the "national poet of Palestine" writes of his connections with exile and how it has become his own

territory (Huri 1). Yair Huri points to the words of Edward Said and the notion of continuity in his studies of Palestinian exile:

> A peripatetic wanderer, the poet assumes the role of an outside observer who attempts to define the life of exiles. By so doing, he obliquely aligns himself with this group of people for whom homelessness is the onlyhome "state," for whom exile is the *only* stable condition they know. In the speaker's eyes, exile is a "circular way" that leads to another exile; in such a condition, there can be no talk about an obvious or clear reality; theonly thing that is certain for the displaced individual is the *omnipresence* of exile. (Huri 10)

In his poem below, titled "Who Am I Without Exile?", Darwish points to himself as a stranger to any physical body of land. Instead, he is bound by water, or rather the freedom of its movement and the energy it carries. Suffering occurs when our mind and spirit become inactive. Similar to Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, Darwish associates the sustenance and mobility through his poetic voice, a poetic homeland. Suffering can occur in exile but it is not defined by the state of being in exile. For some writers, suffering is a state defined by a disconnection of the mind and work towards survival and reconfiguration of a quality of life and intellectual drive while in exile:

> Who Am I Without Exile?
> Stranger on the river bank,
> like the river, water binds me to your name.
> Nothing brings me back from this distance

to the oasis: neither war nor peace.

Nothing grants me entry into the gospels.

Nothing. Nothing shines from the shores

of ebb and flow between the Tigris and the Nile.

Nothing lifts me down from the Pharaoh's chariots.

Nothing carries me, or loads me with an idea:

neither nostalgia, nor promise.

What shall I do? What shall I do without exile

and a long night of gazing at the water?

Water binds me to your name.

Nothing takes me away from the butterflies of dream.

Nothing gives me reality: neither dust, nor fire.

What shall I do without the roses of Samarkand?

What shall I do in a square, where singers are

worn smooth by moonstones?

We have become weightless,

as light as our dwellings in distant winds.

We have, both of us, befriended the strange beings in the clouds.

We have both been freed from the gravity of the land of identity.

What shall we do?

What shall we do without exile

and long nights of gazing at the water?

Water binds me to your name.

Nothing is left of me except you.

Nothing is left of you except me— (1-29)

Darwish confronts his readers, enemies, exile, and self with the knowledge of his identity as transformative. Exile can be liberating and reward an individual with a joy of freeing the constraints of identity. Darwish's poem emphasizes the key to his happiness and survival in the "nothing" that "brings, grants, carries, gives, shines, and loads" life in his exiled world. Most may view Darwish's notation of "nothing" as the negative aspect of an exiled life and equate it with loss. Similarly to Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, Darwish alters the "nothing" of exile to an active state where language becomes the one element he cannot lose. Kozer, as well, marks a stance of insubordination towards exile as a limitation to his ability as a poet. The control of his poetic voice values his experiences as expressed in the following verses of "So I Return to the Call":

. . .I reload the word, incite devotion and apostasy,

I do not fall to my knees, I alone contaminate myself

trying to duplicate and repeat the blurred interjection

of this impenitent poem.

I am the poet, in death's last clutch . . . (11-15).

Vitale presses the idea of self worth with an acceptance of the condition of exile but, more importantly, accepts her situation as a condition characterized by the unknown and unattainable. Re-encountering one's self-worth can be viewed as one of the greatest

obstacles of exile. Before leaving, a writer determines their worth among the surrounding values of peers in their homeland. The separation from that environment imposes a disruption of a familiar system and the only remaining familiar territory remains within the poem. The value of language and poetic verse denounces any existence of limitations. Language promotes power in the knowledge of what is unknown and unstable and celebrates its possibilities. For Vitale, Gelman, and Kozer, uncertainty is powerful. This perspective of "uncertainty" enables the poet an openness to adaptions of a different physical country, language, and, most importantly, the absence of restraining their poetic voice and intellectual growth. Uncertainty feeds the poetic voice and its survival. The verses of "This World" highlight the knowledge of the poetic voice to assume responsibility of self-worth while in exile:

> Only I accept this illuminated world
> certain, inconstant, mine.
> Only I exalt its eternal labyrinth
> and its safe glow, although it may be veiled.
> Away or among dreams
> I walk its grave earth
> and it is its patience in me
> flowering . . . (1-8)

The importance of thought and how that knowledge is implemented poetically displays a focused, mature control of the writer in the works of Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman. Poets, before and after exile, not only concentrate their passion towards writing

but also an intellectual reading of international authors and philosophers. This represents an openness to various beliefs, perspectives, and approaches in the world of literature and education. While continuing to create in their own poetic voice, they still hold sure a passion of learning. Agamben speaks of "thought" in the work of Giacomo Leopardi, a 19th century Italian poet, titled *The Domineering Thought*:

> Here thought still holds the poet prisoner, it is his "powerful dominator"; yet it no longer seems like the cause of any unhappiness, but rather it is "very sweet"; a "terrible, but dear/gift from heaven"; reason for worry, certainly, but the "pleasing cause of infinite worries." In the eyes of the poet thought reveals, as in a "stupendous enchantment" a "new immensity"; but this immensity is the sweetest thing, a "paradise." Now thought is "my" thought, the possession that only death will be able to remove from the poet. Thus the powerful dominator has become something to *have*…" (Agamben 80)

Agamben's declaration of how poets identify pleasure in worry aligns with the Latin American poets of this dissertation, especially in the case of Gelman. The Argentinian poet knew he would always live in a world of infinite worries but survives because his poetry is infinite with possibilities. His thoughts directly express a conversation with poetry, praising its ability to identify his pain. In the poem "Poetry Once More", Gelman values poetry, perceived as one of greatest riches of the world, because of its ability to sacrifice itself to the poet's emotions, weaknesses, and dreams:

> I don't know why you return to this misery /

the riches of all creation are poorer than you /

you come with your body / or words /

or hands / or caresses that touch the ultimate pain /

why do you show me your breasts? / you think

I don't know that beneath forms / figures / images / thrones

or loveliest light /

you are crucified?... (1-8)

Gelman perceives that a lyrical power strips an individual of all layers and exposes the naked core of our nature—a nature that is beautiful and painful. For the poet, our core is composed through language. Sacrifices are indeed experienced by the exiled individual, but language is also transformed by the effect of exile. Marcela Crespo Buiturón in "Inherited Exile and the Work of María Rosa Lojo" studies the effects of exile inherited between family generations. Crespo Buiturón states the ever dependent bond with language and social change:

> Language is established as one of the most important symbolic markers of sociocultural identity. Through it the individual can feel like a member of a group and the members of other groups can be differentiated, since interdiscursivity is understood as sociodiscursivity . . . Within this framework, literature is a confluence of utterances that migrate, accept, transform, diverge, and modify. It is subject to two principles: it is a

> construction of the observer and it is shaped by the social doxa that establishes it. (Crespo Buiturón 210)

Literature embodies the social discourse, and Crespo Buiturón describes this action as transformative and diverse. As individuals adjust to changes within society, language easily demonstrates emotional and physical expressions through its social discourse. The discourse is always evolving due to a flexible nature or framework that reflects positive and negative social reactions. Interestingly, she uses the term "accept" among the components of literature. What is accepted? Ultimately, it must be change that is to be accepted. Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman all show a manner of acceptance to this condition of exile and each poet allows this acceptance to further challenge and improve their poetic creativity. Acceptance signifies that a language, society, social groups, and literature are not static.

The primary focus of this dissertation is directed toward individual cases of poets in exile. It is essential to note that the 21st century continues to witness social reactions and reformation due to the impact of mass refugees forced to flee political and social injustices. In this current century, Gelman remained faithful to his work of publishing books, while Vitale and Kozer continue to produce great works of poetry. Along with these Latin American poets, we must view the importance of how our society evolves with not only individual cases of exile, but with thousands of individuals relocated away from their homeland.

In the year 2013, the PBS program *Frontline* began documenting the impact of the civil war in Syria and the changes it brought to a family with four children, ranging

from four to 12 years old. The father, Abu Ali, was active among the anti-government rebels and kidnapped by ISIS in 2015. The family's mother, Hala, made the heartbreaking decision to flee Syria due to the danger surrounding her children. The children, Sara, Farah, Helen, and Mohammed, fled their homeland of Aleppo with their mother to find refuge in Goslar, Germany. While none of the family members is considered a famous exiled writer, these individuals are documenting an important testimony among thousands of refugees that is essential to understanding how modern societies are continuing to evolve with those living in exile.

Like many exiles, the fear of the unknown finds its way as part of the creation of their future path. Hala, now a refugee, states her fear of discrimination and intolerance while relocating their lives in Germany: "The only thing I fear is religious intolerance. People say that here, Muslims are seen as terrorists. Let's be honest about it. This frightens me. If I feel this happening, I may be forced to return. This is the only fear I have" ("Children of Syria"). While not every exile in the 21st century will not suffer the same discrimination, or any at all, our society is witnessing a global threat of terrorism that is feeding discrimination and fear among nations that are accepting refugees from countries, such as the Middle East.

After the children have settled into their new home and have attended the local schools, they note the changes the German town has experienced besides their own individual changes. The village has been confronted with the aftereffects of a global war against social discrimination. The globalization of our world and the future of children, like these of Syrian refugees, cannot withstand our society blocking change and refusing

to adapt a traditional environment for the need of others. Helen, the eldest daughter explains the changes and impact the German town has seen with language and culture since the arrival of millions of Syrian refugees:

> "Since we first came to Germany, people have arrived in the millions. So in Goslar, we used to hear German talk. Now we hear Syrian talk. So there's a lot of Syrians now. Here in Germany, it's not just the Syrians who've changed. Germany has even changed. At school, my brother Mohammed and I hear a lot of things, like "Get out of our country" and things like that. "Why doesn't your mom work," and "Why are you taking our money?" That makes us uncomfortable. But it's not all of them, of course. ("Children of Syria")

The aspects of language and the cultural representation of Germany have changed indefinitely. The documented experience of this Syrian family displays modern aspects for few cases of exile in that the family receives financial support from the country of asylum. However, the pain of leaving, the uncertainties of their father's life, and the cultural adjustment to a new country have not changed for the exile's experience. Hala reflects on the day her husband was kidnapped, the day that changed everything for their family: "My life ended on a day like today. Abu Ali and I were drinking coffee together. Then he went down to his office, and they were waiting for him. And then they took him . . . I'm now dead. I've been dead for two years. But anything new must be built on ruins, and the people you've lost in the past. I let something very big inside me die for them" ("Children of Syria"). Hala's "death" is the loss her husband and the loss

of her family, all of which represent “home”. Her story is inspiring for many in that out of the “death” she feels there is a hope to rebuild with the lives of her children. She has sacrificed everything for her children’s safety and future. Hala’s sacrifice does not go unnoticed as her eldest children begin to comprehend the difficulties of their mother’s love in loss and hope. Mohammed, the eldest child, relates his perspective towards his current life and his homeland at the closing of the documentary:

> It’s sad what has happened to us, the people of Syria. It’s sad we had to cross the seas, crossing European countries to reach Germany. Sometimes, I think it was wrong for us to come to Germany and that we should have stayed in our country. I will certainly return to my country, whether it’s rebuilt or not. I only came to Germany to secure my future and continue my education. Because I’m not German. After we learn German, we will no longer need their money or anything. All we’ll need is our hard work. No one can ever completely leave their homeland. (“Children of Syria”)

Mohammed’s attitude towards his life as a refugee demonstrates the rapid maturity of an individual with such an experience as this family. He, along with his siblings, continue their lives in Germany with perseverance while never forgetting their past. Identity and homeland become more connected and meaningful through their separation from Syria. The eldest daughter, Helen, not only realized the importance of her family’s sacrifice, but also experienced a freedom from the constraints over Syrian women after leaving her country. Helen explains her mentality towards her family and

notion of her identity:

> When I was in Syria, I didn't appreciate, I didn't know what family is, what's mom or dad. Dad said he had ruined his children's future. And I was thinking about this. Mom endured the four of us for the last two years, and Dad sacrificed everything in his life for his homeland, for us. Now I know the value of a father, and especially my mom. Now I know that homeland is everything. ("Children of Syria")

The final statements of Mohammed and Helen in the *Frontline* documentary display an outlook of perseverance and survival, like that of the writers presented in this dissertation. Though they are not active in the literary world, these children choose to rebuild and rediscover hope through the value of homeland. Their redefined vision of homeland occurs through the sacrifices of a mother and father. A homeland is established, or rather re-established, in the love and hope constructed within their family.

For certain individuals, it is the time of exile that challenges and influences their productivity as a writer and/or their value of self worth. One of the most popular religious figures in the 21st century, Pope Francis, also represents a figure of exile. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, born in Buenos Aires in 1936 to Italian immigrants, has created a strong connection with the immigrant and refugee community due to his own immigrant ancestry and time in exile. In the article "Where Pope Francis Learned Humility", the journalist Vallely describes the transition of the then Cardinal's life that transformed not only his understanding of rule of the Argentine people but also of himself:

> By the time he was sent into exile, according to one senior Jesuit in Rome, around two-thirds of Argentina's Jesuits had lost patience with him . . . In response to these cleavages within the Argentine Jesuit community, Jesuit leaders in Rome eventually decided to strip Bergoglio, then 50, of all responsibility. In 1990, he was sent to Cordoba to live in the Jesuit residence, pray, and work on his doctoral thesis. But he was not permitted to say Mass in public in the Jesuit church. He could only go there to hear confessions. He was not allowed to make phone calls without permission. His letters were controlled. His supporters were told not to contact him. The ostracism from his peers was to be complete. (Vallely "Where Pope Francis Learned Humility")

It was this period of restriction and solitude that allowed Bergoglio to witness the societal weaknesses and poverty that would soon strip him of his own weaknesses of authoritarian jurisdiction in the church. "For the new Bergoglio, humility was more link an intellectual stance than a personal termperament—a tool he developed in his struggle against what he had learned were the weaknesses in his own personality, with its rigid, authoritarian, and egotistical streaks" (Vallely). In 1998, Bergoglio was appointed to bishop but this did not deconstruct his renewed sense of humility and interaction with his community and church officials. As the first Latin American Pope, Francis has attributed his success and appointment to God while noting the importance of his errors that led to his time of exile. His manner and communication with the public display how Pope

Francis' time in exile has played an important role in globalizing his love and work for all communities.

For many writers and artists in the 21st century, exile opens an existence and survival within a globalized community and a globalized intellect. Luis Camnitzer, a Jewish artist from Uruguay, who currently lives in exile in New York since 1964, focuses on the globalized community in his book titled *On Art, Artists, Latin America, and Other Utopias*. Camnitzer reveals how information is circulated in our current century: "We are witnessing a new geography. It is not a geography that ignores local communities in a neighborhood or a village. It is an information system that allows that neighborhood or village to connect, share, and expand with those who have similar interests. More than a geography it is an "infography," a world no longer organized by one's travels, but by how one informs and is informed" (Camnitzer 90). Camnitzer's use of the term "infography" relates to the ease of communication through technology (Twitter, Instagram, blogs, etc,) that surpasses any physical border. It also notes that art can be shared, respected, and valued through all communities and social classes. The comments of the following writers aid in the understanding of how productiveness is rewarded to individuals who allow their personal borders to cross with that of other cultures, languages, and the promotion of intellectual thought.

Ilan Stavans, a Mexican-American author, comments on his personal experiences in "The Writer in Exile" viewing his own diaspora as a benefit to his identity and work as a writer. Stavans was born in Mexico in 1961, to a family with Jewish and European ancestry. Before settling in New York in 1985, Stavans resided in Europe, Latin

America, and the Middle East. As a current professor at Amherst College, he teaches courses over a variety of topics from Jorge Luis Borges to Cervantes. Stavans' literary publications have opened readers to the globalization of our world and how Stavans himself and other immigrants experience a multi-cultural and multi-lingual identity. For Stavans the multiplicity of languages, cultural heritage, and residency proves to be an energetic experience:

> . . . A fourth option is, let's be polyglots, let's live in more than one language, more than one reality. Let's be multilinguists. I write in English for Americans about topics they know little about, and I write in Spanish for Mexicans about topics they are unacquainted with. I act as a bridge, I paraphrase Ambrose Bierce by saying that an interpreter, a translator is someone who wants to convince somebody of a message that was never there in the first place. The Hispanic writers who live in the U.S., are they American or a continuation of Latin America? A difficult question. Being bicultural is being troubled. It's a source of constant conflicts, but only in paradise are there no conflicts. I am the owner of a divided self and am sure my circumstances come as a result of exile and, also, of a polyglot existence. (Pakravan 51)

Similar to the exiled perspectives of Kozer, Vitale and Gelman, Stavans celebrates the ambiguity that surrounds the individual and continually marks our existence as a "work in progress". The one constant, as explained by the Iraqi exiled writer Najem Wali, is found in the freedom of writing: "For in the end, the writer's

homeland is the language in which he writes, and his house is the world which he constructs through his work, just as the homeland of the traveler is wherever his feet may fall. There is no powerful relationship between the place where he writes that is important, but rather the nature of the creative work that he produces. For what is the value of work that doesn't breathe free air . . ." (Kaplan "Homeland as Exile, Exile as Homeland"). Najem Wali, as well as many other exiled writers, are now able to communicate their experience and publish their works and testimonies through the website *Words Without Borders* (www.wordswithoutborders.org) that supports the publication of exiled authors around the world. Najem Wali highlights the necessary elimination of borders when creating purposeful literature:

> Rather, what I want to say is that for a writer, thinking about an "inside" and an "outside" has no importance. What is more important is thinking about the necessary conditions for creativity. In the end, the artist is an exile even when he is in his own country…It follows that the most beautiful homelands are not those determined by an ideological regime (as happened in Iraq, where the regime persisted in imposing itself through death and bullets and destruction and chemical weapons both inside and outside the country). Rather it is what we find in every beautiful novel and every beautiful poem and every beautiful song . . . (Wali "Homeland as Exile…")

In November 2010, the NPR program "Talk of the Nation" invited three exiled writers for an interview titled "Writing in Exile Helps Authors Connect to Home". The

guest writers included Azar Nafisi, an Iranian author, Chenjerai Hove, a poet and novelist from Zimbabwe, and Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian-American author. Azar Nafisi left Iran in 1997 with her husband and children and currently works as a visiting professor at the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University. During the program Nafisi responded to a question concerning her identity and working with that identity through various borders:

> So as an Iranian-American, your history of Iran will not only be useful to Iranians, but it will also be useful to the new—to the country you've adopted. But I wanted to tell you that one of the—I always think, whenever I feel homesick, of what the German thinker Theodor Adorno said, that the highest form of morality is not to feel at home in your own home . . . So literature became a vehicle through which I could communicate both with people inside Iran. And now that I am outside, whenever I want to talk to people about Iran, I want them to know that Iran is not the Iran that Mr. Ahmadinejad is representing. (Nafisi, Radio interview)

During the program, the influence of social media became a topic and how social interactions, such as Twitter, can affect the availability and size of a writer's audience. Nafisi answers:

> I, like Chenjerai, feel that my—I call the readers strangers who, through sharing the same passions and dreams, become intimate in strangers with you. So my readers are—I don't where they are. Because the only place

> where there are no boundaries of nationality or ethnicity or language, is the realm of imagination. And so that is the realm where I work. But social media has changed means of one level, which is information. But still, to know—to put yourself in place of how someone feels in Zimbabwe or Haiti or New Orleans or Iran, you have to experience the story, you have to have the feel of it. And for that, you go to the land of imagination. (Nafisi, Radio interview)

The role of an individual's imagination was crucial to Nafisi during her childhood education as well as her role as a professor in the classroom. In 1981, Nafisi was expelled from the University of Tehran because of her refusal to wear a veil while working in the classroom. Her work as a novelist and a teacher embraced the literary works that allowed herself and her students to work through their own crisis while exposing their understanding and readings to conflicts that would shape a more global perspective:

> No matter how contentious the atmosphere that reigned over the university, it was somehow calming to know that these books had survived wars, revolutions, famines. They had been there long before we were born and would be there long after we were gone. (What was it that Ferdowsi had said "I shall not die, these seeds I have sown will / save / My name and reputation from the grave.") The novels of George Eliot, Jane Austen, Flaubert, and Tolstoy became a vehicle to express the need to foster a democracy of voices . . . and each novel we read seemed to

> offer a lesson in the complexity of moral choices and individual responsibility. (Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination* 229)

After reviewing the experiences of authors and critics from around the world, the writers, individuals, and families who have undergone the experience of exile share a common pain through separation, and sometimes death, but not all can share a joy of survival or persistence. Indeed, our society has emerged into a world that supports technological advances that allow individuals to communicate, if given the opportunity, through videos and enable faster communication through text messages and emails. Public television and radio programs, such as *Frontline* and NPR, expose individual stories and connect others in a similar circumstance with a global objective to inform and expose our understanding to voices across our world. With the knowledge and exposure to writers and individuals in exile, one begins to observe the stages of transformation to a new environment and the challenges brought forth between nostalgia for a past connection/ identity with their home country and a newly created identity separated from that of the familiar home nation. In the study titled "Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America" James Green and Luis Roniger describe how exile poses the challenge of dual identities:

> . . . exile seems to have played an important role in Latin America in defining or redefining both national and pan-Latin American identity. At the same time, though the exiles may claim that they are the true representatives of the people while abroad, they interact in a new environment, exposed to fellow exiles from other countries and

> confronting new models of social engineering that transform them whether they like or not. This poses for exiles a major dilemma at the personal, psychological, familial, and collective level: how to relate to the host society and how to become part of it beyond the instrumental level of everyday life, how to develop hybrid identities and commitments. (Green and Roniger 4)

Green and Roniger point to an essential element of exiled writers such as Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman in that all engage in a commitment. Whether they consider themselves to possess dual identities or one redefined identity, each poet has committed to a passion of writing and engaging their story and hopes with an evolving language. The following words of Nafisi from her novel *The Republic of Imagination* unite exiled individuals across generations, countries, suffering, and yes, even hope, with the key of freedom—a freedom that exile cannot contain, crush, nor define. Nafisi details the writer's sacrifice as an act beyond the individual:

> All writers must take risks; all must tread into the void and darkness; all do so passionately, embracing the agony of freedom and the unknown—that is the price of the ticket, as Baldwin would have said. "Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety. And at such a moment, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will now bring forth, one clings to what one knew, or dreamed that one possessed. Yet, it is lonely when a man is able, without bitterness or self-pity, to

> surrender a dream he has long cherished or a privilege he has long possessed that he is set free—he has set himself free—for higher dreams, for greater privileges. (Nafisi 309-310)

In the article "What Shall We Do Without Exile?: Said and Darwish Address the Future", Judith Butler examines the conflicting Palestinian and Jewish identities of Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish while also aligning their exiled identities in order to implore a future beyond the state of exile. Butler focuses on Darwish's poem "Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading" where Darwish constructs a poetic conversation between himself and Said posing questions and responses to topics of death, identity, and the exiled individual's will. In the poem, the voice of Said repeatedly tells Darwish "If I die before you, / my will is the impossible". In the poem, Said states that his wish for a political solution is not possible to witness in his lifetime. It will be in the hands, or better, the minds and actions of the following generations to carry out the impossible. Butler selects an important section of the poem "Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading" in which she views one of the major issues of exile—identity. Darwish writes:

> What about identity? I asked.
> He said: It's self-defense . . .
> Identity is the child of birth, but
> at the end, it's self-invention, and not
> an inheritance of the past. I am multiple . . .
> Within me an ever new exterior. And
> I belong to the question of the victim. Were I not

from there, I would have trained my heart

to nurture there deer of metaphor . . .

So carry your homeland wherever you go, and be

a narcissist if need be/

The outside world is exile,

exile is the world inside.

And what are you between the two? (67-80)

The terms "multiple" and "ever new exterior" connect this dialogue not only with the wishes between Darwish and Said, but also with Kozer, Vitale, Gelman, and many other poets. Their vision through the poetic voice lends a transfer of power and knowledge to readers who will study this dream of the impossible and make it a reality through intellectual persistence and action. Butler states "If one is to honor Said's final wish, then the poetry of pain will be overcome by the poetry that wills the impossible. Whose will is it? It belongs exclusively neither to Darwish nor to Said, finally, but to the Palestinian people who have become, within the terms of the poem, its readers, and who enter that impossible life and freedom through aesthetic form. And the form is an address, and it admonishes and exhorts its reader, it prompts its reader to act, to speak, to invent, and to will the impossible . . ." (Butler 49). In the poem "Parenthesis, Fragile Home" Vitale exposes her readers to a vigilant spirit that reimagines the structure of "home":

When dark skies worsen

open a parenthesis, tepid sign,

fragile home

having no more roof

than the imagined firmament

(even if it is austere, sour, ill-fated

if it is another who opens it) (1-7)

Vitale has overcome the fragility of a physical homeland and finds an alternative homestay within the framework of a poem. Gelman's optimism in the poem "You Taste" declares that each day begin with an energy recuperated from loss and darkness. Action and hope are found in the darkness of night, the abstract of our world. Gelman proposes beginning each day in the vast darkness of night through the fires of a passion and energy directed at his poetic creation:

each day starts like this / the stars come down

to shield our comrades' bones / to take

a cinder from a burning compañero /

the clear dream of a compañero /

to let him out / to star again / to write on the night…

the day starts

with a burning heart / it starts fires

in my thoughts / the elbow / the darkness

opening its eyes on your sea / (9-12, 13, 17-20)

In their respective states of exile, Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman all speak of the ambiguity of the "possible" through writing against the "impossible". As Darwish writes in his poem, these poets will always carry their homeland and exile to fuel a will towards knowledge, engagement, and productivity.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

"Good modern work, far from being the fragmentary, neurotic thing its disunderstanders think it, is nothing more than work compelled by those conditions. It is a multiplicity of impulses that by their seveal flights, crossing at all eccentric angles, *might* enlighten"

–William Carlos Williams (Lowrey 17).

The poets José Kozer, Ida Vitale, and Juan Gelman represent a generation of 20th century exiled writers that have succeeded professionally and evolved intellectually and emotionally amidst the challenges of establishing a life in a different country and maintaining a rigorous effort to support an intellectual power in their displacement. As the world progresses in the 21st century, these poets and other exiled writers have faced a modernization of communicating that has opened previous limitations. Today, exile and the writer are not necessarily encapsulated by the traditional restrictions of communication. Individuals can cross borders with the use of email, video chats, and social media, depending on the conditions of their exile. However, does globalization and the modern progress of communication ease the difficulty of exile? Of course the search for an answer will depend on the individual circumstance of exile but the challenges of languages, opportunities of employment, cultural adaptation, the creative exercise of writing, and renewing the worth of a poetic verse depend on a valued sense

of self and a perceived progression of self-worth in an evolving world.

Exile is a state that results from a forced action. This force mobilizes even those whose exile is self-inflicted. The choice results from a threat of one's existence in their homeland. The modernization of our communicative system holds a potential to further deepen our isolation from reality. For an exiled writer, it threatens to maximize the ambiguity of an already ambiguous state. The modern technology of the 21st century can also isolate our opportunity of experience and reduce the need to face the pressing challenges within exile. For many writers, exile challenges above all things the individual's relationship with their language. It is in their language where residence cannot be disputed and welcomes survival through change and adaptation. The poet Mahmoud Darwish (1942-2008), also considered the "national poet of Palestine", writes of his connections with exile and how it has become his own territory (Huri 1). Yair Huri points to the words of Edward Said and the notion of continuity in his studies of Palestinian exile:

> A peripatetic wanderer, the poet assumes the role of an outside observer who attempts to define the life of exiles. By so doing, he obliquely aligns himself with this group of people for whom homelessness is the only home "state," for whom exile is the *only* stable condition they know. In the speaker's eyes, exile is a "circular way" that leads to another exile; in such a condition, there can be no talk about an obvious or clear reality; the only thing that is certain for the displaced individual is the *omnipresence* of exile. (Huri 10)

In his poem below, titled “Who Am I Without Exile?”, Darwish points to himself as a stranger to any physical body of land. Instead, he is bound by water, or rather the freedom of its movement and the energy it carries. Suffering occurs when our mind and spirit become inactive:

Who Am I Without Exile?
Stranger on the river bank,
like the river, water binds me to your name.
Nothing brings me back from this distance
to the oasis: neither war nor peace.
Nothing grants me entry into the gospels.
Nothing. Nothing shines from the shores
of ebb and flow between the Tigris and the Nile.
Nothing lifts me down from the Pharaoh’s chariots.
Nothing carries me, or loads me with an idea:
neither nostalgia, nor promise.
What shall I do? What shall I do without exile
and a long night of gazing at the water?

Water binds me to your name.
Nothing takes me away from the butterflies of dream.
Nothing gives me reality: neither dust, nor fire.
What shall I do without the roses of Samarkand?
What shall I do in a square, where singers are

worn smooth by moonstones?

We have become weightless,

as light as our dwellings in distant winds.

We have, both of us, befriended the strange beings in the clouds.

We have both been freed from the gravity of the land of identity.

What shall we do?

What shall we do without exile

and long nights of gazing at the water?

Water binds me to your name.

Nothing is left of me except you.

Nothing is left of you except me— (1-29)

Darwish confronts his readers, enemies, exile, and self with the knowledge of his identity as transformative. Exile can be liberating and reward an individual with a joy of freeing the constraints of identity. Darwish's poem emphasizes the key to his happiness and survival in the "nothing" that "brings, grants, carries, gives, shines, and loads" life in his exiled world. Most may view Darwish's notation of "nothing" as the negative aspect of an exiled life and equate it with loss. Similarly to Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman, Darwish alters the "nothing" of exile to an active state where language becomes the one element he cannot lose. Marcela Crespo Buiturón in "Inherited Exile and the Work of María Rosa Lojo" studies the affects of exile inherited between family generations:

> Language is established as one of the most important symbolic markers of sociocultural identity. Through it the individual can feel like a member of a group and the members of other groups can be differentiated, since interdiscursivity is understood as sociodiscursivity. . . . Within this framework, literature is a confluence of utterances that migrate, accept, transform, diverge, and modify. It is subject to two principles: it is a construction of the observer and it is shaped by the social doxa that establishes it. (Crespo Buiturón 210)

For these poets, exile leads them back to their language. Language grants, brings, shines, lifts, carries, and loads the poet with possibilities. Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman have gone beyond uniting the Latin American struggle of an exile. They have globalized the Latin American experience with poetic voices that universalize their feeling and actions while in exile. It is because of Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman's encouraging plurality of envisioning their world that makes their poetry accessible to a multicultural audience. The objective of poetry, and production of good poetry, releases a certain intimacy to connect with our past through their poetic language. It is an intimacy with death and consequences of violence, an intimacy of separation, an intimacy of identities challenged to develop within constant cycles of change. This is where Kozer, Vitale, Gelman flourish as poets. They direct that of the abstract into a poetic energy, an intellectual resistance to static—a frozen state is not their definition of exile. Exile is a plurality of exercising and transforming language. Exile can be a poet's true homeland where

survival enhances their self-worth and production of poetry. Within this plurality exists possibility—an openness to change, to pain, to the past, to recover, and to regain.

What is language for Kozer? Language is change and change is what Kozer designates as a norm that resists the permanent stability of the world around him and his work as a poet. Language turns our senses to the future. Kozer aligns with the notion of a modern nostalgic. He accepts that a true return to this country from his exile is unattainable. The manner in which Kozer returns to the past takes a poetic path where memories are subject to shadows and light. These instances of clarity and abstractness mark the progression of our identity. The uncertainty of exile mirrors the displacement of how one can define their social identity. The self is multiplied but not broken over memories of pain, struggle, but, more importantly, the strength to call for justice and awareness.

Kozer's reconfiguration of our insight is subject to a constant motion. The power of interpretation lies not with the voices of the past. The strength lies within the mediator, the poetic voice that is open to movement through memories that leads to progression. For Kozer, success as a poet is linked with his success in prioritizing Spanish as his true method of expression. In his exile, he first lost his Spanish to an immediate need to survive through working in an English-dominated world. Kozer deviated from the social pressures that weakened his Spanish and found solace, a homeland, in the energy only Spanish could give his poetry. His devotion to writing is fueled by a devotion to reading. Kozer does not reflect the image of an all-knowing poet. His poems are viewed as compilations of various influences of writers across the globe.

Kozer rebuilds the exile's homeland through a redefined set of values that support the poet's survival in his displacement. For Kozer, the poet's world is reconfigured by the values he perceives in his work as an educator, a husband, and father, and, lastly, the continuous study and passion as a reader of all literatures and writer of a spirited poetry. Kozer best summarizes his life as an exile by promoting the benefits of the experience of life. The needs to feel pain and rejoice complement one another in order to obtain meaning and worth in our lives. Yes, there is a call for intellectual thought, but it cannot bring clarity or a sense of worth without action and a drive to evolve with the changes of our environment.

Ida Vitale continues to reconstruct a life in exile with a sense of stoicism and enlightenment that, in turn, celebrates life and intellectual thought. Vitale's poetry seeks visualizations and connections between the past, present, and future, and the role of the intellectual and poet. Her existence outside the realm of Uruguay creates an environment of ambiguity where the poet seeks growth and creativity. It is a space that challenges the writer to reestablish the self towards an evolving intellectual purpose and the reality of life and death.

Vitale, similar to Darwish, reveals to her readers the idea that the poet determines his or her own journey. It is a personal progression and determined only by the self. Vitale guides the reader through this self-enhancement through a repetition of verbs that claim the present actions of "exalt", "live", "await", "am", "remain", and "reborn". The poet acknowledges life's past and current obstacles with an ever-present deviance to write, to reflect, and to empower the reader. Writing is believing in what is unknown, or

even imagined. It is in that invisibility that salvation can exist and hope can be procured. This state of disorientation reminds us of the importance of movement, life, and awakening within poetry; a rhythm connecting the past with the future; a rhythm that sustains the poet as well.

Julio Cortázar was asked by Gelman to write the foreword to his book *Unthinkable Tendernes,s* and the words of Cortázar proclaim how we all can learn from the progression of Gelman as a poet and individual after facing the many sides of exile. Cortázar writes:

> Perhaps the best I can say to the reader is that to embark upon thses poems is to embark upon a path, following its curves and slopes, stopping where the path appears to end in crossroads and resuming the journey as each poem takes up from the preceding one. One and only one poem is born from the sum of the poems. . . . Where masculine becomes feminine and vice versa in order to stomp on the canons of stereotypical thought, where words we use passively become active and operative, there the poem ceases to be communication and becomes contact; Juan and his reader cease to be alone, separately traveling the path that seeks to lead us to ourselves. (Gelman 3-5)

The poetry of Juan Gelman carries the importance of a monument where literature commemorates the dead, questions actions of injustice, and above all, allows a certain movement or openness for the poetic voice and reader to participate in self-reflection while welcoming perceptions of hope. Gelman's poetry inspires a battle

against silence with words that evolve life's path within the space of exile and time. Water, an element in Gelman's poetry like Darwish, acts as a carrying agent across time where we carry loss and tragedy but it these difficulties do not stop us from moving forward. Gelman transforms his exile into a reconfigured vision of life, language, and self-worth.

In 1934, Walter Benjamin commented on the importance of the writer, not only for the empowerment of the writer but for that of the reader as well: "*An author who teaches writers nothing, teaches no one*. What matters, therefore, is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and secon to put an approval apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers—that is, readers or spectators into collaborators" (Lowney 17). The importance of nostalgia for Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman lies in the idea presented by Walter Benjamin that experiences or emotions that were once damaged or castoff can resurface to serve in the process of recovery and healing in the future (Ilie 28-29). Through the concept of artistic catharsis, these writers encountered an ability to cope with a state of isolation and developed a feeling of purpose by means of producing literature that reinstates a passion for truth and personal expression. The selected poems of this dissertation demonstrated a process by which Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman persevered through the ambiguity of nostalgia, and individual metamorphosis evolved towards a particular ideology in regards to an acceptance of their identity as an exile and the reconstruction of life while in exile.

Readers will acknowledge that the memories, testimonies, and desires of these poets integrate a notion of exile that, at one moment, marginalizes the individual experience. On the other hand, these Latin American poets unify a global voice. This is a voice that does not allow fear or pain to prevent the individual's yearning to question, to seek advice, vengeance, and answers. Vitale, Gelman, and Kozer turn to a renewed sense of life through their poetry and produce a testimony that survives isolation and empowers feelings of nostalgia. The isolated state of exile fails to succeed in weakening the mind and, in turn, strength is reconstructed through a need to recover the past, enhance one's understanding of the individual self, and direct one's thoughts towards the future.

This dissertation proposed and directed a meaningful insight towards the painful hardships of a life of exile, the tricky games of memories, and an achieved peace with an isolation of self. The analysis of the poems by Kozer, Vitale, and Gelman demonstrated that these particular poets will never succumb to their frustration and pain as being termed a victim. The productiveness of their writing and willingness to persist through an emptiness of understanding why reveals that these writers define their identity by the act of transformation. For these individuals, transformation instills itself in their environment, self-conception, and the individual mind. Through the work of these authors, one perceives that each will not succumb to being a victim in the state of exile by a process of redefining a value system that promotes a healing act of questioning, remembrance, patience, and a willingness to exert the intellectual thought for what lies in the future.

For Kozer, a life in exile is a life of risk. This dissertation has focused on his resistance to a deterioration of his language through a valued relationship of his native language, Spanish, and poetry. This research proves that language and poetry represent a movement risking the pain of memories and a reconstruction of identity. The poems presented in this dissertation from Vitale continue to prove the importance of movement within poetry. While symbols of labyrinths contrast with light, this analysis reveals how Vitale chooses to reactivate a hopeful, driven life in exile as opposed to a deconstruction of one's intellect and self-worth. Of the three poets in this dissertation, the poems of Juan Gelman expose a certain vulnerability and sacrifice while surviving a life in exile. It is only through this state of vulnerability that Gelman enriches his work as a poet—a power he invented himself, the will to *"gelmanear"*. Finally, this dissertation proves how a poet must confirm his or her self-worth through a constant discourse with the dead, with their native country, and, finally, with the possibilities found within the Word.

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